

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
3 January 2002 (03.01.2002)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 02/01469 A2

(51) International Patent Classification: **G06F 17/60**

(21) International Application Number: **PCT/US01/20482**

(22) International Filing Date: **27 June 2001 (27.06.2001)**

(25) Filing Language: **English**

(26) Publication Language: **English**

(30) Priority Data:
09/604,525 **27 June 2000 (27.06.2000)** **US**

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(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— *with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract; title not checked by the International Searching Authority*

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

WO 02/01469 A2

(54) Title: **METHOD FOR FACILITATING PAYMENT OF A COMPUTERIZED TRANSACTION**

(57) Abstract:

METHOD FOR FACILITATING PAYMENT OF A COMPUTERIZED TRANSACTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates in general to a method for facilitating a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using a computer network, such as the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

With the increased worldwide use of the Internet, a greater number of businesses and merchants are creating "virtual" storefronts accessible to users on the Internet. These merchants offer, for example, retail products ranging from books, compact discs, and clothing to furniture, airline tickets, and antiques, just to name a few. In fact, the Internet has become such a major vehicle for electronic commerce that many Internet businesses display their products and take orders from customers exclusively over the Internet. While the Internet provides an effective means for merchants to promote, display, or list their various products to an enormous market of potential customers, there are only a few conventional methods by which a customer or buyer can pay the merchant for any goods or services purchased electronically over the Internet.

Conventionally, an Internet user can purchase an item from a merchant over the Internet using a credit card, or by a COD (cash on delivery) service,

or by check or money order, or the like. In the credit card payment method, buyers provide their confidential credit card information to the merchant over the Internet, and the merchant processes the transaction by charging the buyers' credit card. The credit card payment method has the disadvantage of
5 inaccessibility to all potential Internet purchasers, as every Internet user may not have a credit card account with a sufficient credit limit to complete a desired transaction. Further, many Internet users are reluctant to use the credit card payment method due to the perception that confidential credit card information may be intercepted, stolen, or otherwise misused when
10 communicated over the Internet. The conventional credit card payment method may be problematic for international customers for the same reasons.

An "electronic wallet/purse" payment method also exists, wherein for on-line purchases the consumer uses an Internet "wallet/purse" account which draws against an actual checking account, credit card, or debit card. This
15 approach also has limited usefulness for consumers who do not have checking accounts or credit cards, or for consumers who choose not wish to provide the checking account or credit card account information over the Internet to establish the virtual wallet/purse.

Further, merchants are often reluctant to accept credit card orders from
20 some foreign countries due to the possibility of fraud. Also, merchants wishing to sell products to U.S. and international consumers may be hampered by the merchant's inability to obtain and establish merchant credit card

processing accounts, particularly where the merchants are international merchants without an appropriate U.S. domicile.

Accordingly, what is needed is a method for facilitating the purchase of goods and services over the Internet by consumers who either do not have
5 credit card accounts, or choose not to provide confidential credit card account information or checking account information over the Internet. It with this background in mind that the present invention was developed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In light of the above, and according to a broad aspect of the invention,
10 disclosed herein is a method for facilitating a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using a computer network, such as the Internet. The method includes the steps of communicating, from a seller's computing station to an agent computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the
15 buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction. In one example, the agent computing system is a money transfer system having a computer and a database. The agent computing system communicates transaction information displayable to the buyer. In one example, the transaction information is sent to the seller's computing station, and the seller displays the transaction
20 information to the buyer on one or more pages of the seller's web site when accessed by the buyer. Receiving an actual payment from the buyer at a plurality of agent locations is provided for, the agent locations being in communication with the agent computing system. Upon receiving the actual

payment from the buyer at one of the agent locations, a message is communicated to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was received at the agent location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer. Funds are transferred to the seller, and in one
5 example, the agent computing system transfers funds into an account established with the seller.

In one embodiment, the transaction information includes a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction. The transaction information can also include an order number corresponding to
10 a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction; a new total price which is the amount of the transaction plus a processing fee due from the buyer payable at the agent location; and an exchange rate between a first local currency usable to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller. The total price of the transaction can be
15 expressed in the first local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay at the agent location in the buyer's local currency. Preferably the funds transferred to the seller from the agent computing system are paid in the second currency usable by the seller.

According to another broad aspect of the invention, disclosed herein is a
20 method for processing a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, wherein the transaction being initiated over a computer network such as the Internet. The method includes providing an agent computing system coupled to the computer network, the

agent computing system adapted to communicate with a seller's computing station over the computer network; providing a plurality of agent payment locations accessible to the buyer, the agent payment locations communicating with the agent computing system over the computer network; communicating,
5 from the seller's computing station to the agent computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction; communicating transaction information to the buyer from the agent computing system; providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at one of the
10 agent payment locations; and upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at one of the plurality of the agent payment locations, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was received at the agent payment location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer. Preferably, the agent computing system transfers funds to the seller
15 in a currency usable by the seller.

The foregoing and other features, utilities and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of a preferred embodiment of the invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 illustrates a block diagram of a system for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using

a computer network, such as the Internet, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 illustrates the logical operations for a buyer/consumer to select the payment method for a computerized transaction in accordance with one
5 embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 3 illustrates the logical operations for an electronic transaction to be completed according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 illustrates a computer screen wherein an example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has selected an item to purchase by
10 an electronic transaction over the Internet.

Fig. 5 illustrates a computer screen wherein an example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has entered shipping information for the electronic transaction of Fig. 4.

Figs. 6A-D illustrate a series of exemplary computer screens wherein an
15 example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has selected the payment method in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, and the confirmation information and transaction number are displayed to the buyer/consumer in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

20 Figs. 7A-B illustrate an example computer screen wherein information relating to agent locations is shown.

Fig. 8 illustrates an example of a form generated containing the electronic transaction information, the form being suitable for use by the agent

at the agent station, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 9 illustrates the logical operations of an alternative embodiment of the present invention for a buyer to select the payment method for a computerized transaction with a seller who uses a bidding process on the web site, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 10 illustrates the logical operations performed by an agent location in order to process an electronic payment transaction in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 11A-11C illustrate exemplary computer screen displays of a computer operating at the agent location.

Fig. 12 illustrates an example schema for the message delivery queuing system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 13 illustrates device queue records of the message delivery queuing system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 14 illustrates an example of a delivery mechanism for the agent computing system to communicate with an agent location, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 15 illustrates an example of a delivery mechanism for the agent computing system to communicate with an agent location, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In accordance with the embodiments of the present invention, a method for facilitating payment of a computerized transaction is disclosed herein. The method can be implemented using a computing system coupled to a network, such as the Internet. The method generally permits a customer/buyer to select an electronic payment method for a purchase, obtain confirmation information regarding the transaction, and provides for the customer/user to make an actual payment for the transaction at one of a plurality of payment locations accessible to the buyer. The actual payment is preferably a cash payment, although the payment could also be in the form of a check, money order, credit card, or the like.

Upon receiving the payment from the buyer at one of the payment locations, the seller is notified over the Internet that the actual payment for the transaction was received at a payment location, and the seller can then ship the purchased items to the buyer. In this manner, a buyer can use the payment method of the present invention to pay for an item purchased over a computer network without the need for having to use a credit card, and without having to provide confidential information, such as a credit card account number or a bank account number, over the Internet.

Referring to Fig. 1, a block diagram of a system for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction is shown, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

A buyer or customer 30, having a buyer's computing station 32, communicates with a merchant's or seller's computing system 34 over a computer network 36, such as the Internet. The merchant or seller's computing system 34 can include a server 38 which hosts the merchant's web site 40 for access by a plurality of potential buyers over the Internet. The merchant's web site 40 is, in accordance with the present invention, adapted to display an electronic payment method in accordance with the present invention, referred to herein as "FLASHCASH (SM)" or as the electronic payment method of the present invention. The merchant's web site 40 is adapted to display an icon, or other user-selectable indicia, to launch the electronic payment method described herein.

An agent computing system 42 (also referred to herein as a money transfer system) is also shown in Fig. 1, which is responsible for processing incoming requests from merchants or buyers regarding the electronic payment. In one example, the agent computing system 42 has a staging area 44 and a payment confirmation queue 46. The staging area 44 is used to queue and track incoming transaction requests. For instance, upon the buyer selecting an item for purchase and selecting the electronic payment method, the merchant's server 38 generates an electronic payment request which is transferred to the agent computing system 42. The agent computing system 42 receives the request, and creates a unique record of the request and stores the unique record in the staging area 44. Further operations performed by the agent computing system/money transfer system are described below.

The record includes data regarding the transaction, including, for example, the buyer's identification (such as a name, e-mail address, physical address, etc.), the seller's identification (the seller's name, physical address, phone number, e-mail address, etc.), the date of the transaction, a summary of the item or items being purchased, along with the purchase and shipping price for the items, and a total price for the transaction. Further, the agent computing system 42 assigns a unique transaction or confirmation number, to each incoming transaction request. This number is uniquely and permanently associated with the particular transaction during the life of the transaction. In one example, the transaction number is used as a reference number for the transaction until the transaction has been completed (i.e., the buyer has made the payment at the agent location). In one example, the uniqueness of the transaction number is limited from the time beginning when the transaction is initiated, to the time in which the buyer required to make the payment or once the payment has been made. After this time, the transaction number may be re-used by the agent computing system 42 to track another transaction. In one example, once the buyer makes the payment due, a money transfer control number, also being unique for each transaction, is provided as proof of payment or receipt.

Optionally, the agent computing system 42 can also associate an order number provided by the merchant for the merchant's tracking of the transaction. When the buyer has made an actual payment to one of the plurality of agent locations 48, the agent computing system 42 moves its

record of the transaction from the staging area 44 to the payment confirmation queue 46, so that the seller can be notified of the buyer's payment, and the funds can be transferred to the seller.

As will be described below, the agent computing system 42 can also
5 associate various exchange rates with the transaction based on the geographic location of either the buyer or the seller, and provide a calculated total price due by the buyer in a local currency usable by the buyer. In this manner, a buyer in a foreign country can purchase and employ the electronic payment method of the present invention to purchase an item using foreign currency,
10 while the seller is paid for the transaction using its own local currency. In one example, the currency information associated with the transaction by the agent computing system is derived from the shipping information (i.e., buyer's and seller's addresses) shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 1 also illustrates a plurality of agent locations 48 accessible to the
15 buyer. Agent locations 48 may include any device capable of communicating with the agent computing system 42 and transferring value to the agent computing system 42 to complete payment of the transaction. The agent locations 48 are, in one example, physical business locations wherein the buyer can walk into one of the agent locations in order to physically make an actual
20 payment in accordance with the present invention. In another example, agent locations 48 include stand-alone computing systems with money-transfer capabilities, such as an automatic teller machine (ATM) adapted to communicate with and transfer funds to the agent computing system 42.

Preferably, the agent locations 48 are located throughout cities and in various countries globally, so that a buyer can give an actual payment to one of the many agent locations 48 located throughout the world. Preferably, each agent location 48 is equipped with the capability to communicate, either by
5 computer network or otherwise, with the agent computing system 42 to reference any of the transactions stored in the agent computing system 42. For instance, the plurality of agent locations 48 can be provided with computing systems which are coupled to and in communication with the agent computing system 42 over a computer network, such as the Internet or other computing
10 network. Alternatively, other computing systems such as ATMs or the like can access the agent computing system 42.

A payment gateway 50 is also shown in Fig. 1. The payment gateway 50 is a means by which merchants optionally handle the processing of orders. Payment gateway 50 is generally provided to the merchant by a third-party
15 service provider, to process payments. For instance, the payment gateway known as "CyberCash" provides payment software and services enabling conventional electronic commerce for merchants. The payment gateway 50 is a means by which the merchant offloads the transaction processing which would normally be handled at the merchant's server. However, not all Internet
20 merchants use a third-party payment gateway. For example, at present, the amazon.com merchant web site has its own internal payment gateway for processing payments.

Hence, communications to and from the agent computing system 42 and the merchant's computing system 34 can be handled either by the payment gateway 50 or by the merchant's server 40 directly, depending upon the particular implementation chosen by the merchant. Accordingly, the
5 functionality of the merchant's computing system 34 to communicate with the agent computing system 42 and the merchant's particular payment gateway could be included within the merchant's computing system 34.

In overall general operation, and referring to Fig. 1, the buyer 30 makes a purchase using the buyer's computing station 32 over the Internet 36 by
10 accessing the merchant's web site 40, and the buyer selects the electronic payment method of the present invention as a way to pay for the purchase (instead of purchasing by using an credit card or other conventional means). The merchant's computing system 34 then communicates the transaction either to the payment gateway 50, or directly to the agent computing system 42,
15 depending upon the particular implementation, for processing by the agent computing system 42 in accordance with the present invention. The operations shown in Figs. 2-3 and the information shown in Figs. 4-9 further illustrate various aspects of the invention.

Referring now to Fig. 2, the logical operations for a buyer to select the
20 payment method under the present invention are shown. At operation 100, the buyer selects goods to be purchased and places the goods in a virtual shopping cart. At operation 102, the buyer proceeds to the checkout section of the merchant's web site. At operation 104, the buyer enters the appropriate

shipping information to have the goods delivered as the buyer desires, and at operation 106, the buyer selects the desired shipping method. At operation 108, the charges relating to the transaction (including the cost of the goods and the shipping charges) are totaled.

5 At operation 110, the buyer selects the desired method of payment for the transaction. Decision operation 112 determines if the electronic payment method of the present invention has been selected. If no, then operation 114 submits the order to the merchant for processing as is conventionally performed. However, if decision operation 112 determines that the electronic
10 payment method of the present invention has been selected by the buyer, then operation 116 re-totals the charges to include a processing fee associated with the present invention. Operation 118 then submits the order to the merchant, and submits the order to the agent computing system in accordance with the present invention. At operation 120, the agent computing system logs the
15 transaction and generates a confirmation number, which is preferably communicated to the merchant and to the consumer preferably through the merchant. The agent computing system 42 may communicate confirmation information using a variety of communications methods, such as, for example, facsimile transmission, automated telephonic response units, E-mail, personal
20 digital assistants (PDAs), or the like.

Referring to Fig. 3, the logical operations for the completion of an electronic transaction are illustrated according to one embodiment of the present invention. In response to a request to initiate a transaction, the agent

computing system creates a "will pay" transaction and generates a confirmation number at operation 130. The "will pay" transaction is the internal record to the agent computing system which contains the information regarding the particular transaction, including the buyer's information, the seller's
5 information, and a unique confirmation number associated with the transaction. At operation 132, the agent computing system passes the confirmation number to the merchant via the payment gateway, or directly to the merchant's server. At operation 134, the merchant passes the confirmation number to the consumer along with an order acknowledgment.

10 One feature of the present invention is that the agent computing system can optionally track the timeliness of the payment by the consumer. Decision operation 136 determines whether the consumer completes the transaction within an allotted number of days, as governed by an agreement between the merchant and the consumer. Operation 136 can be easily performed by the
15 agent computing system through the use of a timer or date stamps associated with the transaction. In this manner, the agent computing system can track whether a particular transaction has become "stale" or whether the transaction can still be completed by timely payment of the consumer. It is understood, however, that operation 136 is optional.

20 At operation 138, the consumer visits any agent location worldwide, and provides the agent location with the confirmation number associated with the particular transaction. At operation 140, the agent location references the confirmation number to determine the total amount due from the consumer.

This amount due can be expressed either in the same currency as used by the seller, or in a local currency usable by the buyer.

At operation 142, the consumer pays at the agent location, preferably using cash. However, the agent location could also be equipped to securely
5 accept credit cards, checks, or other forms of payment. In this manner, the consumer has made a payment at a physical location, as opposed to having to communicate confidential credit card account information or checking account information over the Internet.

At operation 144, the agent computing system creates a "have paid"
10 transaction, indicating that the consumer has paid the amount due for a particular transaction. At operation 146, the agent computing system notifies the payment gateway or the merchant directly to indicate to the merchant that the payment has been received. Preferably, the notification operation 146 is performed as quickly as possible, and preferably over a high-speed computer
15 link, so that the merchant is promptly informed of the payment by the buyer.

At operation 148, in response to receipt of the notification of the buyer's payment, the seller initiates the shipment of the order of the item to the buyer. At operation 150, the funds for the transaction are transferred to the seller to complete the transaction, under the direction of the agent computing system.

20 The amount of the funds transferred to the seller are, in one example, the purchase price plus the shipping costs, and in another example, discounted by a transaction fee and/or a percentage fee of the transaction. It is understood that operation 150 could occur in parallel with operations 144 and 146. The funds

transferred by operation 150 can be in a currency usable by the seller, such currency being the same or different currency as provided by the buyer at operation 142. In this way, purchasers in a foreign country can effect the transaction using currencies local to the purchasers but different than that used
5 by the seller if the seller is located in a different country.

In one embodiment, if the consumer does not complete the transaction within the allocated number of days, the agent computing system can optionally cancel the transaction at operation 152, and at operation 154 optionally notify the payment gateway, or the merchant directly, that the
10 transaction has been cancelled. At operation 156, the merchant optionally notifies the consumer that the transaction was cancelled due to the buyer's failure to provide a timely payment, and further that no goods will be shipped or services provided in accordance with the transaction.

Figs. 4-7 illustrate examples of display screens as displayed to a
15 purchaser through the merchant's web site. Referring to Fig. 4, an example merchant's web site 180 is shown with an item 182 for purchase. Referring to Fig. 5, the merchant's web page 180 is shown which queries for shipping information 184A from the buyer, including the buyer's name, the buyer's address, the buyer's country, and other information such as the buyer's
20 telephone number. The buyer provides that information to the merchant through shipping web page 180 of Fig. 5.

Product and shipping cost field 186 indicates the subtotal for the purchase of the items 182. Web page 180 of Fig. 5 preferably includes an

indication of the number of items being purchased and the cost per item, as well as the shipping costs associated with the transaction.

Referring to Figs. 6A-E, the merchant's web site then displays a series of web pages regarding the electronic payment in accordance with one
5 embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Fig. 6A, the merchant web page 180 displays the information 182 about the item(s) selected for purchase by the buyer, fields 184B regarding billing information, field 186 showing the cost of the items and shipping, and payment method fields 188 having a variety of user selectable fields 190A, 190B, 190C, 190D which provide the user with
10 various payment methods. In accordance with the present invention, the user selectable field 190B provides the buyer with the option to pay for the transaction using the methods described herein.

Upon the user selecting the electronic payment method association with field 190B, the information is displayed to the buyer about the transaction so
15 that the buyer can proceed with completing the transaction using the electronic payment method of the present invention.

Referring now to Fig. 6B, the merchant web page displays further information regarding the electronic payment method of the present invention. A payment method indicator field 192 indicates and confirms to the buyer that
20 the electronic payment method of the present invention has been selected. A link 194 is provided for information regarding the electronic payment method so that the purchaser can obtain information, details, and answers to frequently asked questions. A link 196 provides the buyer with information relating to

the geographic addresses of the agent locations where the buyer can complete the transaction. For instance, as shown in Fig. 7A, information regarding agent locations can be provided to the user in geographic locations specified by the user. More specific information about a particular agent location can
5 also be provided, such as the information shown in Fig. 7B.

Referring back to Fig. 6B, merchant web page 180 also displays exchange rate information 198 between the currency of the seller and the currency local to the buyer. A purchase total field 200 is expressed in the local currency and converts the amount in field 186 (cost of the items being
10 purchased plus shipping costs, as expressed in the seller's currency) into an amount expressed in the local currency of the buyer.

A transaction fee field 202 indicates the cost to the buyer for using the electronic payment service provided by the agent computing system and the plurality of agent locations. In one example, the transaction fee field is
15 expressed in the local currency of the buyer. A grand total field 204 indicates the total amount to be paid by the buyer to the agent location nearest the buyer, in order to complete the transaction. Preferably, the grand total field 204 is expressed in the same currency as used by the buyer. In one example, the amount shown in fields 200, 202 and 204 are based upon a current
20 exchange rate and calculated by the agent computing system at the time the transaction is being processed thereby. By expressing the product prices in the currency of the seller and the purchase costs (i.e., fields 200, 202 and 204) in

the currency of the buyer, international transactions are more easily facilitated by the present invention.

A "complete checkout" user-selectable control 205 is provided so that the buyer can complete the on-line portion of the transaction. Upon the user
5 selecting the control 205, the transaction is processed and information regarding the transaction obtained from the merchant's web pages (i.e., Figs. 5 and 6A-B) is sent to the agent computing system/money transfer system 48 and processed therein, as described in operations 116, 118, and 120 in Fig. 2 and operations 130, 132, and 134 of Fig. 3.

10 After the agent computing system has assigned a confirmation number to the transaction and compiled the other information regarding the transaction, the agent computing system communicates this information to the merchant's server for communication to the buyer as shown in Figs. 6C-D. In Figs. 6C-D, the merchant's web site displays an "order confirmation" page
15 which contains a variety of information fields. A confirmation number field 208 is displayed within the order confirmation page which shows the transaction number created by the agent computing system and uniquely assigned to this transaction. A shipping information field 184A contains the shipping data as previously specified by the buyer, and billing information
20 184B specified by the buyer is also preferably displayed.

An instruction field 206 is also displayed within an "order confirmation" section of the merchant's web page 180 (shown in Fig. 6C). The instruction field 206 preferably indicates that the buyer should print a copy of the order

confirmation page, or at a minimum write down the confirmation number shown in field 208, for later use. The buyer is instructed to take this information, together with the payment, to the nearest agent payment location. A link 196 to a list of the nearest agent payment locations is also provided on
5 page 180, for ease of use by the buyer. An information link 194 about the electronic payment method can also be displayed within page 180 of Figs. 6C and 6D.

While Figs. 6A-D show a number of fields and links containing a variety of information, it is understood that the information can be displayed in
10 different combinations or throughout one or more web pages of the merchant's web site, and additional information can be provided as well, if appropriate. For example, contact information regarding the seller, such as the seller's e-mail address, toll-free telephone number, fax number, web site address, and/or mailing address can also be included in the confirmation page display.

15 Upon the buyer making payment for the transaction at an agent payment location, a money transfer form can be generated by the agent payment location or by the agent computing system for transmission to the merchant seller. An example of such a money transfer form 218 is illustrated in Fig. 8. The form contains a sender field 220, identifying the name and address of the
20 buyer. A confirmation number field 222 is also indicated, as well as an optional order number field 224 corresponding to an order number specified by the merchant for identifying the transaction. This order number field 224 is communicated by the merchant's web server to the agent computing system as

part of the information communicated regarding the transaction when an electronic payment transaction is initially requested.

A total amount paid field 226 is also indicated on the money transfer form 218 which indicates the amount of money paid by the buyer at the agent
5 payment location.

Preferably, each Internet merchant adapts their web site to include an electronic payment option in accordance with the present invention. The merchant and the entity operating the agent computing system and the plurality of agent locations would agree to the terms and conditions of the services
10 being offered by the entity. The entity could then add and register the merchant within the agent computing system, as well as within the plurality of agent locations, so that the processing of the electronic payment transactions is simplified.

While the methods of the present invention have been described with
15 respect to computerized transactions initiated by a buyer over the Internet, it is understood that the same method could be applied if the buyer initiates the transaction using other sources. For example, a buyer could communicate with the merchant and place an order by telephone or fax, wherein the merchant would then generate an electronic payment transaction request as described
20 above. Additionally, a variety of computing input devices usable by the buyer are contemplated, including a conventional personal computer having web browsing capabilities, a cellular phone or personal digital assistant having web

browsing capabilities, or a kiosk or other computer input device computing with the merchant's server over a computer network such as the Internet.

The methods of the present invention have been described with respect to a merchant having a merchant server which controls the merchant's web
5 page or virtual storefront. However, the methods of the present invention can also be used to facilitate transactions between a buyer and a non-merchant seller, such as an individual selling an item on an auction web site (*e.g.*, eBay.com). In Fig. 9, the eBay auction web site is used as an example, along with the billpoint person-to-person credit card payment service provided on the
10 eBay web site.

In the example of Fig. 9, it is assumed that the BillPoint service has made the electronic payment method of the present invention available to the seller and buyer on eBay as one of the payment choices. Referring to Fig. 9, at operation 240 the buyer places a successful bid on the eBay web site, where
15 the seller has listed an item for sale by auction. At operation 242, the seller and buyer agree to use the "FlashCash" electronic payment of the present invention as the method of payment for the auction transaction.

At operation 244, the seller or buyer uses the BillPoint service of eBay to submit the transaction to the agent computing system shown in Fig. 1.
20 Information regarding the auction is passed to the agent computing system, such as the names and addresses of the buyers and sellers, the item purchased, the price preferably including shipping costs, the auction number, and the date.

At operation 246, the agent computing system assigns a unique confirmation number to this transaction, and communicates this confirmation number to the seller. Operation 246 also communicates the total amount owed payable by the buyer, and can express this amount in a local currency if appropriate, as previously described. At operation 248, the seller provides the transaction number and other payment information to the buyer, and at operation 250, the buyer pays the specified payment amount to the agent at one of the agent locations.

At operations 252-254, confirmation of the payment is communicated from the agent computing system to BillPoint on eBay in order to notify the seller of the buyer's payment. At operation 256, BillPoint notifies the seller that the payment was made by the buyer, so then at operation 258 the seller can ship the goods to the buyer. At operation 260, the funds received at the agent location for the purchase price and shipping costs are transferred to the seller under the direction of the agent computer system. As indicated previously, the funds can be transferred in a currency usable by the seller which is different from the currency used by the buyer.

Upon completion of the online portion of the transaction by the buyer, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 makes the transaction record available for access by any one of the plurality of agent locations 48 in order to complete the transaction. In particular, the transaction is completed after the buyer visits an agent location and tenders payment for the transaction, at which time the agent location accesses the transaction records stored at the

agent computing system/money transfer system 42. Fig. 10 illustrates the logical operations performed at the agent location for completing the transaction.

At operation 280 of Fig. 10, a buyer visits an agent location and
5 requests to complete the transaction by tendering payment (i.e., paying the grand total amount indicated in field 204 of Fig. 6C). At operation 282 and in one example, the local agent at the agent location initiates software operating on the agent's local computer. As will be described with reference to Figs. 14 and 15, the agent's local computer can be simple or complex, and is preferably
10 coupled to a network in communications with the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. At operation 284, the local agent initiates software operations which are adapted to obtain information regarding the electronic payment transaction particularly specified by the buyer at operation 280. At operation 286, the local agent enters the transaction
15 number/confirmation number (i.e., the transaction number indicated in field 208 of Fig. 6D) into a query screen, and operation 288, the local agent submits the query/request to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42.

Upon receiving the local agent's query/request, the agent computing
20 system/money transfer system 42 then searches its database for information relating to the transaction identified by the transaction/confirmation number specified by the local agent at operation 286. If the transaction is found, decision operation 290 passes control to operation 292. If, however, the

transaction is not found, decision operation 290 informs the local agent that the specified transaction number is invalid, whereupon the local agent can repeat operations 286-288 with a different transaction number.

Preferably, operations 282-288 are performed by a local agent having a
5 computing system connected over a network to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. It is understood, however, that operations 282-288 could be performed by a local agent communicating with the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 via facsimile, telephone, or other like means. Furthermore, it is understood that the local agent
10 functions could be integrated within the software of an automatic teller machine (ATM) or other like system.

At operation 292, the local agent can optionally verbally confirm, with a person having access to the records of the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, or with the buyer, that the correct transaction has been
15 found.

At operation 294, the local agent collects payment from the buyer for the transaction. The amount of the payment collected is preferably in the currency local to the buyer, and preferably corresponds to the amount specified in field 204 of Fig. 6C.

20 At operation 296, the local agent then submits a message or record to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 indicating that the buyer has tendered the payment for the transaction and that the local agent has received such payment.

Operation 298 determines if the transaction amount exceeds compliance limits (e.g., Texas compliance limit of \$1,000 on international transfers). If not, then control is passed to operation 300 wherein the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 returns a money transfer control number to the local agent. The money transfer control number provides proof of payment for the buyer's records as well as the records of the local agent. At operation 302, the local agent provides a receipt to the buyer indicating that the transaction has been completed. The receipt, in one example, is preferably in the form as shown in Fig. 8.

If operation 298 determines that the transaction amount exceeds the compliance limits, then control is passed to operation 304 wherein the local agent solicits additional information from the buyer (e.g., occupation, social security number, and/or other identification). At operation 306, the local agent enters the additional information into the local agent's computing system and transmits this information to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 for processing therein and approval thereof.

Upon completion of the transaction at operations 296, 300 and 302, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 transmits a message to the merchant's computing system indicating that payment for the transaction has been received by the local agent 48. The agent computing system/money transfer system 42 preferably transfers funds to the merchant in the amount of the cost of the goods plus the cost of shipping, discounted by any transaction fees charged to the merchant. Preferably, the money transferred to the

merchant is transferred in the currency specified by the merchant. The merchant ships the goods purchased by the buyer to the buyer at the buyer's shipping address (for example, as specified in field 184 of Fig. 6D). The entire transaction is then complete.

5 Figs. 11A-11C illustrate exemplary computing screen displays at a local agent. As shown in Figs. 11A-11C, a variety of information relating to the transaction is made accessible to the local agent. Referring to Fig. 11A, the local agent enters the transaction number which the buyer presents to the local agent (i.e., the transaction number specified in field 208 of Fig. 6D). In
10 Fig. 11B, the local agent is then provided with information relating to the transaction, including information relating to the buyer, and information relating to the seller. Further, the exchange rate can be displayed, as well as a financial summary indicating the amount to collect from the buyer.

In Fig. 11C, after the local agent has received payment from the buyer,
15 the local agent transmits a message to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 that the payment has been received. In response, and as shown in Fig. 11C, a money transfer control number is generated by the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 and communicated to the local agent 48. The local agent then provides this money transfer control number to
20 the buyer as proof of the buyer's payment.

Preferably, a message delivery queuing system is used to communicate messages between, for instance, the merchant's computing system 34, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at

agent locations 48. The delivery queuing system is preferably implemented across the software devices employed by the merchant's computing system 34, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at agent locations 48. As described herein and depending on the flow direction of a particular message, the merchant computing system 34, the agent
5 computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at agent locations 48 can be senders or receivers of a message.

The queuing system separates the many pieces of a messaging system to allow independent customization at the point where it is needed. The form and
10 method of the initial capture are not captive to the output format or technology. The messages may be in any of several formats depending on sender preferences, receiver requirements, message type, output hardware and communications protocol. The receiver (in one example, the agent at the agent location 48) preferably may receive the message directly from the money
15 transfer system 48, or it may be delivered through some other delivery system. The message output may occur as soon as possible after receipt of another message or it may be scheduled to match the receiver's hours of operation.

The queuing system allows for the initiation of several output messages as a consequence of actions taken on a money transfer or message. The sender
20 is relieved of the knowing many of the delivery requirements of the receiver even if the delivery mechanism should change between receipt of the input and the delivery of the output.

The output message sent to the receiver is delivered singly during the hours specified or in a batch as specified by the receiver. The message output may be routed directly upon selection of this receiver by the sender at recording time. Alternatively, the sender may provide the message type and the receiver's address and the system will route the output through a third party delivery system, for example.

Each sender interaction with the system is captured in one of two types of message records. These records contain the sender information, identify the recipient and the means to get the message to the recipient, and the message itself. Preferably, each of these records is uniquely identified by a control number, and duplicate control numbers are not allowed. Valid control numbers are guaranteed to identify exactly one message record.

The delivery queuing system is preferably implemented using CODASYL database structures and memory resident data extracted from these records. Using the member-owner relationship, sorted sets, and key data that uniquely identifies records, an efficient and highly controllable mechanism is built. The queuing system preferably functions in real time.

Each "client" computing system (i.e., the merchants' computing system or the computing system operating at the agent location 48) or third party delivery system is uniquely identified within the system as a "client" record. These message recipients can be made available to the sender via a pull down list of aliases shown at recording time. In one example, third party delivery

systems are not explicitly identified by the sender but are merely the vehicle through which a message will be routed.

As shown in Fig. 12, within the client record is a list of device identifiers to which the output for this client should be queued. Each of these
5 device identifiers is the key to a "device" record. The device record reflects the format in which the message is to be delivered to the receiver. Device records are also configured as being in a certain "class" as determined by the needs and limits of the client's receiving mechanism. Depending on the capabilities of the client, the device record may allow only one or several
10 message deliveries to be outstanding at any time depending in part upon the sophistication and technology of the computing systems involved and the volume of traffic. Each record allows for delivery times to be customized to serve the needs of the client.

Preferably, the memory image of the device record is updated whenever
15 the database device record is updated. This may be through a database maintenance routine update, the arrival of a new item for delivery to this device, moving an item to the "delivery in progress" queue, or completion of the delivery, for example.

As shown in Fig. 13, in one example, attached to the device record are
20 three ordered sets of "device queue" records. Messages are queued for delivery through this device by placing the unique message control number in a device queue record that is owned by the device record. These three sets represent

messages awaiting delivery, messages currently being delivered, and messages awaiting confirmation of delivery.

Senders may put messages into the system through several channels. For example, a voice-originated message may be entered via a terminal operated by an operator. Alternatively, an agent may enter the message using a terminal located at his storefront. Individual messages may be collected together and delivered to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 from a third party messaging business. Preferably, all sources connect to the agent computing system/money transfer system 48 by way of one of the network nodes.

Depending upon the client or third party receiver's volume and level of technology, delivery of the message may be done on an item by item basis or a bulk delivery may be done at specified intervals during the day.

As shown in Fig. 14, smaller clients with low technology levels and low volumes may be set up with a modem and a printer, for example, to act as single item delivery boxes. The printer may be loaded with special paper, check stock for instance. A personal computer for example, with up to 28 output ports configured, acts as a single item delivery computer and requests work based on its configuration parameters and port availability. These parameters match the class of the device record. The single item delivery computer communicates with a Network Node via a high-speed LAN connection.

As shown in Fig. 15, for bulk delivery of messages, large volume clients may receive a file containing any number of message items using higher speed connections. These deliveries may be scheduled to occur several times per day and at times depending upon the day of the week. For these clients, the
5 network node stands in for the single item delivery box and periodically requests the messages from the database server. The messages are collected until the first message recording time which occurs after the opening of a delivery window.

As shown in Figs. 14 and 15, the network nodes provide security for the
10 database server of the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. Preferably, all delivery system interactions occur through a network node, and there are several network nodes and each backs up the other nodes to provide a robust, reliable network with extremely high availability.

Preferably and in one example, the agent computing system/money
15 transfer system 42 is implemented as a plurality of delivery computers coupled to a database server with a money transfer host computer coordinating operations. The database server is the repository for the message records, and ensures delivery of each record, tracks the time delay between recording and delivery, forces delivery in order of recording, extracts the relevant data to be
20 included in the output message, and allows for redelivery of an item where necessary. The message delivery process is initiated by the delivery computers connected to the database server via network nodes or by the network nodes themselves. Each delivery box and network node can request work from

different classes of devices. This allows load balancing, redundancy and efficient use of limited hardware. Positive acknowledgement of delivery of a message by the delivering computer to the database server causes the queued item to be removed from the queue and marked as delivered. The network
5 nodes offer other methods of connectivity and larger bandwidth for bulk delivery of items.

Each delivery computer is preferably configured with several modems and communications lines, with each of these ports configured for a class of traffic which identifies modem speed and type. When the port is available for
10 work, the delivery computer requests a delivery item for that class, and this request is passed by the network node to the money transfer host computer of the agent computing system/money transfer system 48.

Preferably, the money transfer host computer processes single item and bulk delivery requests independent of the others wherein several threads of
15 execution of the same routine may run concurrently with the class of work requested determining which of these routines is executed.

A delivery acknowledgement may be included in the request for work. This acknowledgement contains the control number of the delivered item and provides a positive indication of successful delivery to the receiving device.
20 On the money transfer host computer, the delivery acknowledgement causes the device queue record for the just delivered item to be removed from the queue and the main record to be updated with a delivered status. The acknowledgement may also indicate that no more deliveries can be attempted

on this device on this connection. This would be, for example, due to the receiving device capacity limitations.

If the receiving device class and the number of deliveries completed on this connection indicate that another item may be delivered, the awaiting
5 delivery queue for this device is examined. If there is another item on the queue, it is selected for delivery and the device record status is updated to reflect this. If there are no more items on the queue, a "no work" response is returned to the requesting delivery computer.

The money transfer host computer preferably maintains a list of all the
10 single item delivery devices in memory along with the device class, number of items queued for delivery, delivery hours, and the device status. When a request for work comes in, a search is performed through the list of devices from the device record which was last selected. The first device in the specified class, with device queue records on the awaiting delivery queue, and
15 currently open for deliveries is selected and the device ID is passed to the requesting program.

The frequency of requests for work from an idle port diminishes as "no work" responses are returned by the money transfer host computer, which reduces the resources consumed processing non-productive inquiries.

20 For clients with large volumes and a richer assortment of technology it may be more practical to collect the single delivery items into files of several thousands. In this process, the network nodes stands in for the delivery computers and requests work for a specific client. There may be several

deliveries in progress concurrently so that the data may be collected faster. These files are then sent to the money transfer host computer according to the needs of the receiving client. Preferably, the same process of marking a delivery queue item for "delivery in progress" and updating the main record
5 occur for these items also.

Preferably aspects of the invention can be embodied in a computer program product, and aspects of the invention described herein can be implemented as logical operations in a computing system. The logical operations, or portions thereof, can be implemented (1) as a sequence of
10 computing implemented steps running on the computing system and (2) as interconnected machine modules within the computing system. The implementation is a matter of choice dependent on the performance requirements of the computing system implementing the invention. Accordingly, the logical operations making up the embodiments or aspects of
15 the invention described herein are referred to variously as operations, steps, or modules.

While the methods disclosed herein has been described and shown with reference to particular steps performed in a particular order, it will be understood that these steps may be combined, sub-divided, or re-ordered to
20 form an equivalent method or methods without departing from the teachings of the present invention. Accordingly, unless specifically indicated herein, the order and grouping of the steps is not a limitation of the present invention.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various other changes in the form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

We claim:

1. A method for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, comprising:

communicating, from a seller's computing station to an agent computing
5 system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction;

communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer from the agent computing system;

10 providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at an agent location, said agent location being in communication with said agent computing system; and

upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at the agent location, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was
15 received at the agent location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
transferring funds to the seller.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an order number corresponding to a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a new total price which is the amount of the transaction plus a processing fee due from the buyer payable at the agent location.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an exchange rate between a first local currency usable to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller;

5 communicating a total price of the transaction, the total price being expressed in the first local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay at the agent location in said first local currency.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller in said second currency usable by the seller.

8. A method for processing a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, the transaction being initiated over a computer network, comprising:

providing an agent computing system coupled to said computer
5 network, the agent computing system adapted to communicate with a seller's
computing station over the computer network;

providing a plurality of agent payment locations accessible to the buyer,
the agent payment locations communicating with the agent computing system
over the computer network;

10 communicating, from the seller's computing station to the agent
computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the
seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the
transaction;

communicating transaction information to the buyer from the agent
15 computing system;

providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at one of said
agent payment locations; and

upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at the agent payment
location, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the
20 transaction was received at the agent payment location, thereby permitting the
seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating
transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an order number corresponding to a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an exchange rate between a first currency local to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller, so that the buyer can pay
5 using the first local currency.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller in said second currency usable by the seller.

14. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a total price of the transaction expressed in a local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay using the local
5 currency.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller in a second currency usable by the seller.

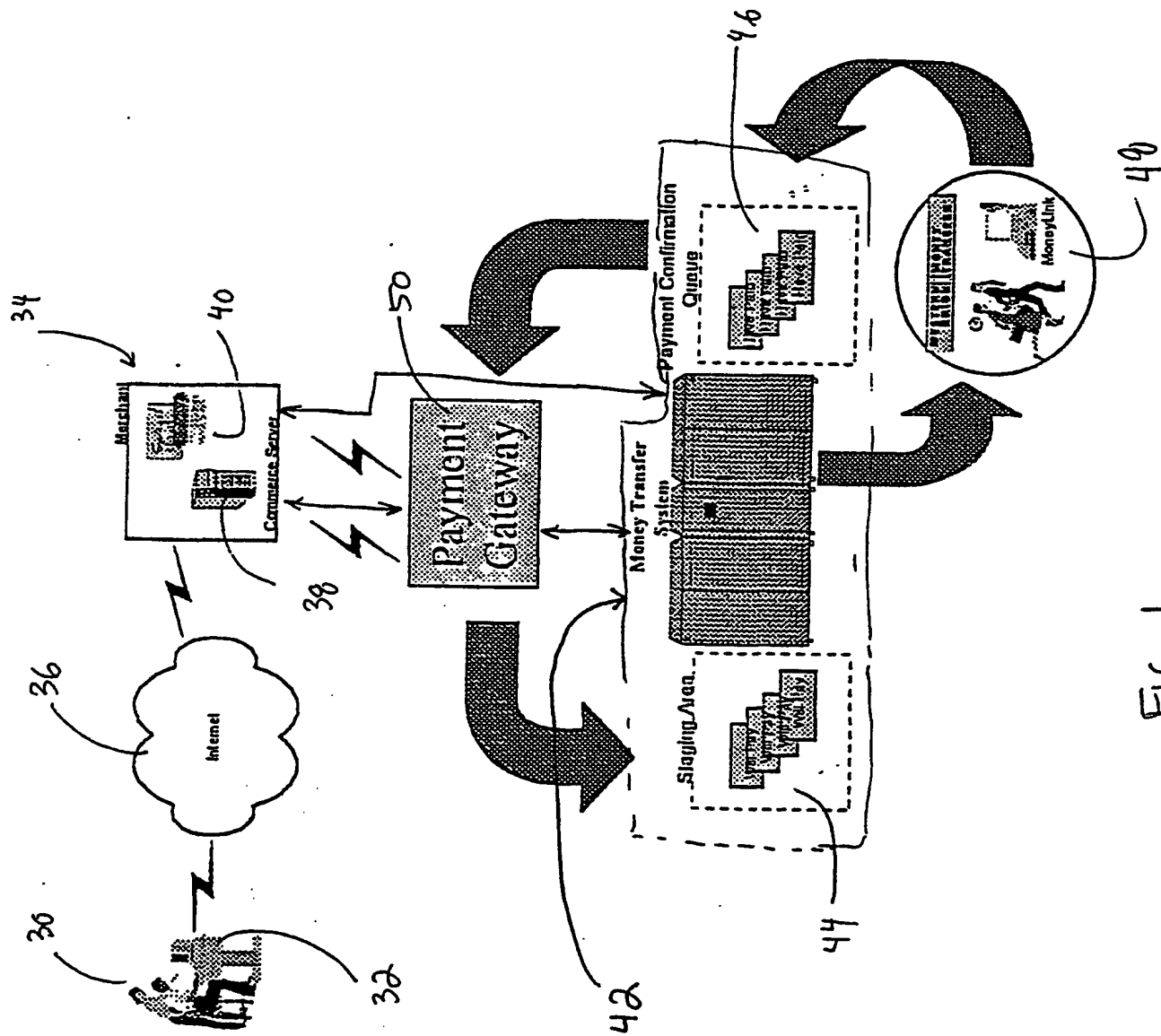


FIG. 1

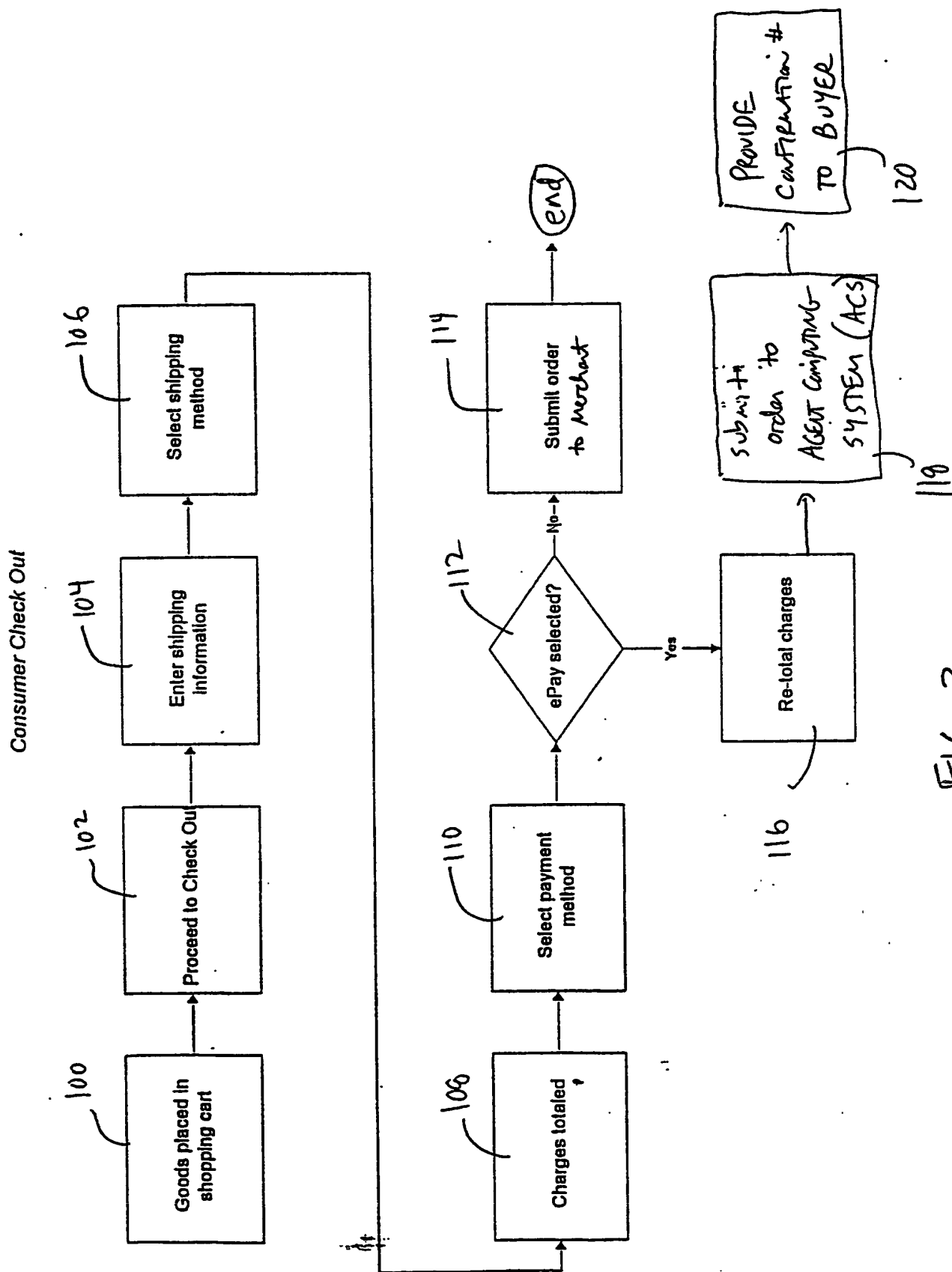


FIG. 2

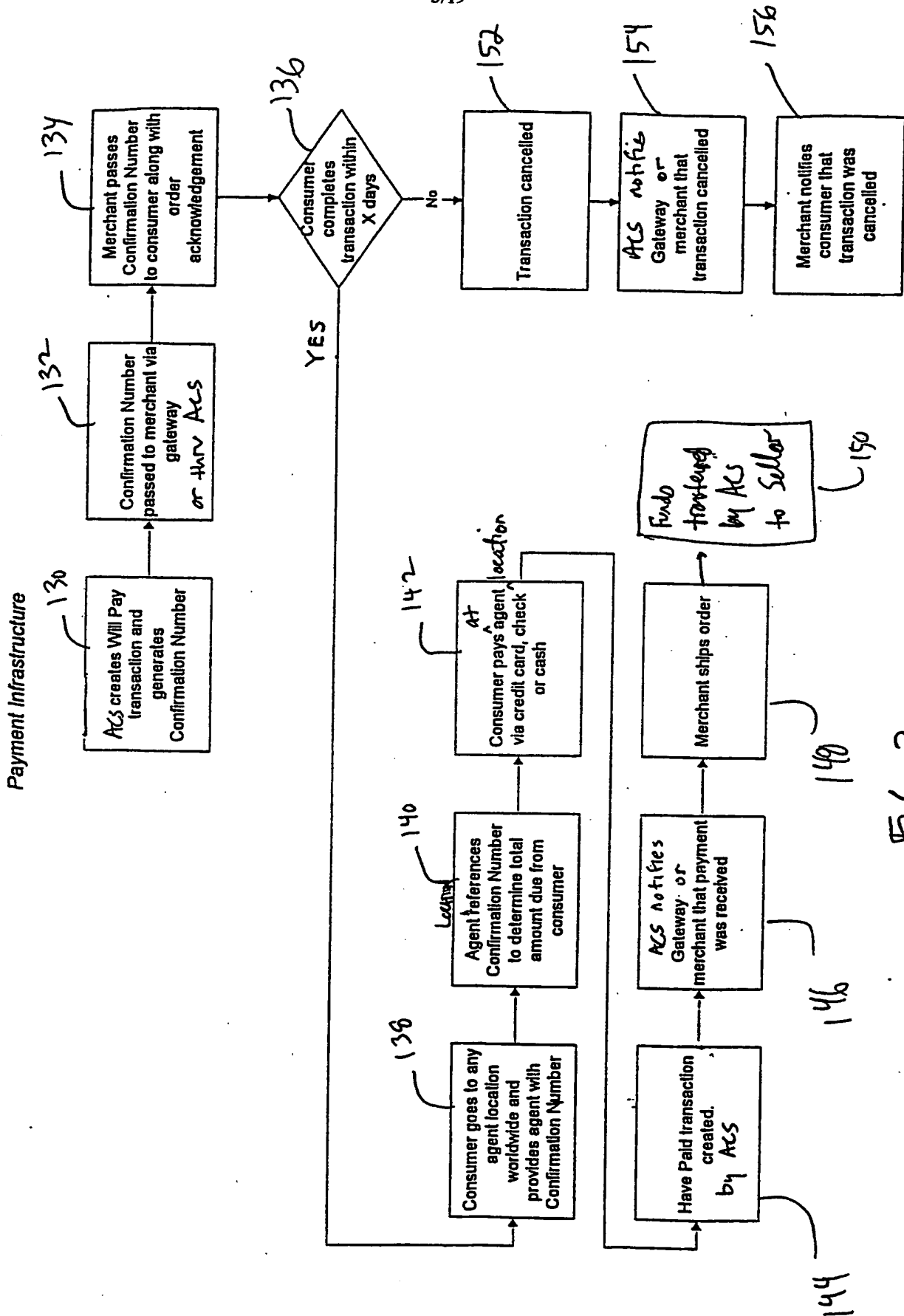


FIG. 3

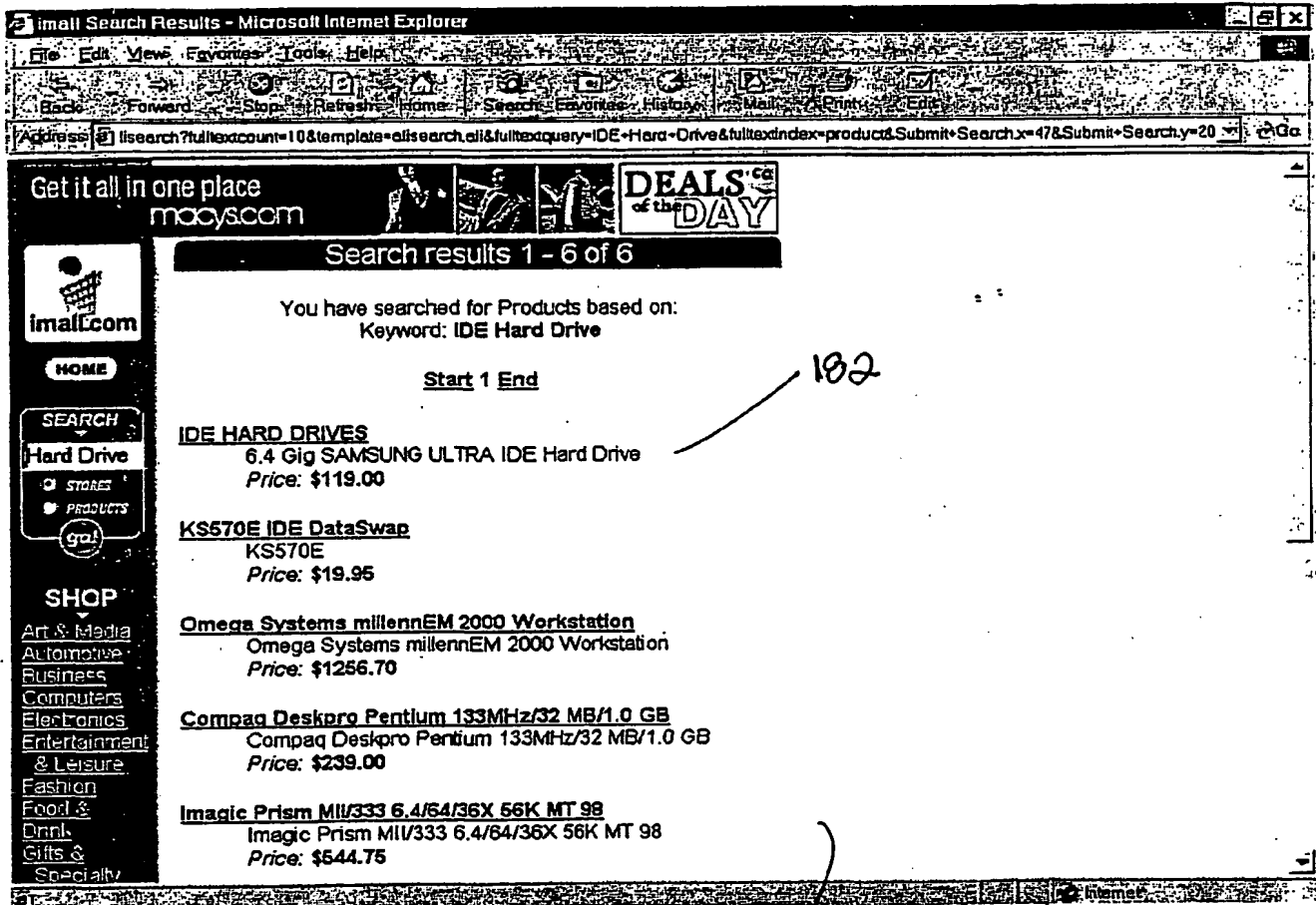


FIG. 4

check out

Shipping

powered by **imall**

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

Return to Shopping	Product Name	Qty	Unit Price	Total Price
	IDE HARD DRIVES Samsung 3.5 Inch Internal Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!! SKU:123-456789	3	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00
Shipping: GROUND... - \$ 8.00				\$ 8.00
Subtotal				\$ 86.00
No Sales Tax				\$ 0.00
Total				\$ 86.00

Recalculate Total

Please fill in shipping information below and click "Ready to Pay".

For a gift order, you may add a greeting, a brief message and your name or group.

Shipping Information	Gift Message
Name <input type="text" value="Robert L. Martin"/>	Message To <input type="text"/>
Address 1 <input type="text" value="5314 North"/>	Body of Message <input type="text"/>
Address 2 <input type="text" value="250 West"/>	Message From <input type="text"/>
City <input type="text" value="Rostov-on-Don"/>	
State <input type="text"/> or Province <input type="text"/>	
Zip/Postal Code <input type="text" value="abc123"/> Country <input type="text" value="Russia"/>	
Day Phone <input type="text" value="15.888.426.7306"/>	
Eve. Phone <input type="text" value="15.888.426.7306"/>	
Instructions or Comments <input type="text"/>	

Continue ...ready to pay

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FIG. 5

check out
Billing



powered by **imall**

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

Return to Shopping

Qty	Item Name	Unit Price	Price
1	IDE HARD DRIVES	\$ 25.00	\$ 78.00

Samsung 3.5 Inch Internal Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR
REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!
SKU:123-456789

Shipping: GROUND... - \$ 8.00 \$ 8.00

Subtotal \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax \$ 0.00

Recalculate
Total

Total \$ 86.00

If different than "Ship to" address, please enter your
"Bill to" address exactly as it appears on your
credit card statement.

Bill to:

Name	Robert L. Martin		
Address 1	5314 North		
Address 2	250 West		
City	Rostov-on-Don		
State		or Province	
Zip/Postal Code	abc123	Country	Russia
Day Phone	15.888.426.7306		
Eve. Phone	15.888.426.7306		

Please fill in payment information below and click
"Complete Check Out" when done.

Payment Information

Card Type	American Express
Card #	
Expiration	OCT 1999
Name on Card	
Purchase Order #	
Email Address	bobm3@imall.com

(Confirmation to be sent to this address)

Online Payment Options

Electronic	Online
 Pay By Electronic Check Online - US Only -	 COD Check or Money Order
 Payment by Cash at Western Union	 Order by Telephone

- ☒ Yes, please securely save my payment and shipping information to speed check out on future orders.
- ☒ Yes, I would like to receive periodic email notification of new features and special offers.
- ☒ Yes, make the information that I supplied available to selected companies so that they may contact me regarding products or services.

Continue
...complete check out

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FIG. 5A

check out

using Western Union FlashCash

**Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"**

Return to Shopping

Product Description	Unit Price	Price
IDE HARD DRIVES	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00

Samsung 3.5 Inch Internal Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR
REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!

SKU:123-456789

Shipping: GROUND... -- \$ 8.00 \$ 8.00

Subtotal \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax \$ 0.00

 Recalculate
Total

Total \$ 86.00

Purchase Total in Russian Rubles 2212.78

Western Union Fee in Russian Rubles 192.97

Grand Total in Russian Rubles 2405.75



You have chosen to pay cash for this transaction using
Western Union FlashCash. Please enter email address,
review information below, and click "Complete Check Out".

Payment by Western Union FlashCash
 Email Address: bobm@imall.com
(Confirmation to be sent to this address)

 To locate you nearest agent in Russia
or worldwide [click here.](#)
Tell Me More About Western Union FlashCash
 The current exchange rate is:
\$1.00 USD = 25.73 Russian Rubles

Products selected for purchase will not be
shipped until payment is received by
Western Union. If not paid within 72 hours,
this order will be cancelled.

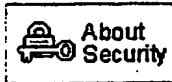
Other Payment Options**Electronic**
 Pay By
Electronic
Check Online
US Only
**Cash Payments**

- ☒ Yes, I would like to receive periodic email notification of new features and special offers.
- ☒ Yes, make the information that I supplied available to selected companies so that they may contact me regarding products or services.

 Continue
...complete check out

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Fig. 6 B

**order
confirmation**

powered by imail

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

Return to
Shopping

Product Description	Qty	Unit Price	Price
IDE HARD DRIVES	1	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00

Samsung 3.5 Inch Internal Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR
REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!

SKU:123-456789

Shipping via Ground \$ 8.00

Subtotal \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax \$ 0.00

	Amount	\$ 86.00
--	--------	----------

Purchase Total in Russian Rubles 2212.78

Western Union Fee in Russian Rubles 192.97

	Grand Total in Russian Rubles	2405.75
--	-------------------------------	---------



You have chosen to pay cash for this transaction using Western Union FlashCash. To make payment, print this page or write down the Transaction Number listed below. Take this information along with payment to your nearest Western Union agent. To locate your nearest agent in Russia, or worldwide, [click here](#).

FIG. 6C

180
200
Transaction Number: 1234567890

Products selected for purchase will not be shipped until payment is received by Western Union. If not paid within 72 hours, this order will be cancelled.

194 Tell Me More About Western Union FlashCash

The current exchange rate is:
\$1.00 USD = 25.73 Russian Rubles

198
Thank you for ordering from "XYZ" Merchant. Your order #xxxxx-xxxxxxxxxxx was received mm/dd/yyyy a.m./p.m. You will receive an e-mail confirmation at your selected e-mail address.

Ship to Name/Address/Phone:

184 A
Robert L. Martin
5314 North
250 West
Rostov-on-Don
abc123 Russia
15.888.426.7306
15.888.426.7306

Bill to Name/Address/Phone:

184 B
Robert L. Martin
5314 North
250 West
Rostov-on-Don
abc123 Russia
15.888.426.7306
15.888.426.7306

For followup order questions, please contact "XYZ" Merchant via phone, FAX, or e-mail:

E-Mail:	orders@"XYZ" Merchant.com
Toll-Free Phone #	1-800-xxx-call
Phone #	1-xxx-555-1212
FAX:	1-800-fax-xxxx
Website:	"XYZ" Merchant.com
Mailing Address:	"XYZ" Merchant 123 Address Way Suite xxx Anytown, USA 12345

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Fig. 6D

http://intl.westernunion.com/db/web/iamnot6a.nsf/Main?OpenFrameSet - Microsoft Internet Explorer


WESTERN UNION		Quick Search		
		Country List	City	
		UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	new york	
Select the country from the map below or the country list above				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unedea Check Cashing #28	New York	NY #62 Lexington Ave	10021
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Emporium #742	New York	NY 1066 Third Avenue	10021
<input type="checkbox"/>	Esther Check Cashing	New York	NY 91-A Pinehurst Ave	10033
<input type="checkbox"/>	A&P #712	New York	NY 223 West End Ave	10023
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Emporium #727	New York	NY 452 West 43Rd St	10036
<input type="checkbox"/>	Banco Popular Fsb	West New York NJ	5310 Bergenline Ave	07093
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kara Travel & Tours	New York	NY 1225 Broadway Suite #815	10001
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unedea Check Cashing #24	New York	NY 250 East Houston St	10002
<input type="checkbox"/>	Empire Travel	New York	NY 103 Clinton St	10002
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chambers St Check Cash	New York	NY 79 Chambers St	10007
<input type="checkbox"/>	Western Union	New York	NY 1440 Broadway	10018
<input type="checkbox"/>	Esco Drug Co Inc	New York	NY 687 9Th Ave	10036
<input type="checkbox"/>	Harold Lee & Sons Inc	New York	NY 32 Pell St	10013
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay-O-Matic #301	New York	NY 200 West 14Th St	10011
<input type="checkbox"/>	79 Avenue D Check Cashing Corp	New York	NY 89-97 Ave C	10009
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay-O-Matic #315	New York	NY 2351 Second Ave	10035
<input type="checkbox"/>	Columbus Circle Ck Cashing	New York	NY 807 9Th Ave	10019
<input type="checkbox"/>	G & R Check Cash #19	New York	NY 73 4Th Ave	10003
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay-O-Matic #317	New York	NY 3426 Broadway	10031
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay-O-Matic #318	New York	NY 3651 Broadway	10031
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay-O-Matic #320	New York	NY 4984 Broadway	10034
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gamma Check Cashing	New York	NY 158 E 45 St	10017
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ukrainian Orthodox Feu	New York	NY 215 Second Ave	10003
<input type="checkbox"/>	Popular Cash Express	New York	NY 175 Lyckman St	10040
<input type="checkbox"/>	Franklin Check Cashing #1	New York	NY 228 Avenue B	10009
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yomar Travel Corp	New York	NY 36 Nagle Ave	10040
<input type="checkbox"/>	Natalie's Travel	New York	NY 319 Audubon	10033

FIG. 7A

http://intl.westernunion.com/db/web/iamnol6e.nsf/Main?OpenFrameSet - Microsoft Internet Explorer

WESTERN UNION Quick Search

Country List City

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA new york Go

Select the country from the map below or the country list above.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
United States Of America

AGENT INFORMATION

Agent Name: WESTERN UNION

Address: 1440 BROADWAY
New York NY,10018

Maps: GET YAHOO MAP

Phone Num: (212) 354-97500000

Agent Type:

☐ Send Money Transfer Only

☐ Receive Money Transfer Only

☒ Send and Receive Money Transfer

WESTERN UNION HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
700 - 2359	Open 24 Hours a day	Open 24 Hours a day	2359	2359	700 - 2359	800 - 2359

Holiday Hours may be subject to change. You may want to call the Agent.

LUNCH

Closed for Lunch No

FIG. 7B

FORM. BY SIGNING THIS FORM, I ACKNOWLEDGE
Copyright © 1999 WESTERN UNION FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON WHICH THIS SERVICE IS PROVIDED ARE SET OUT ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM. BY SIGNING THIS FORM, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THOSE TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

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Transaction Flow

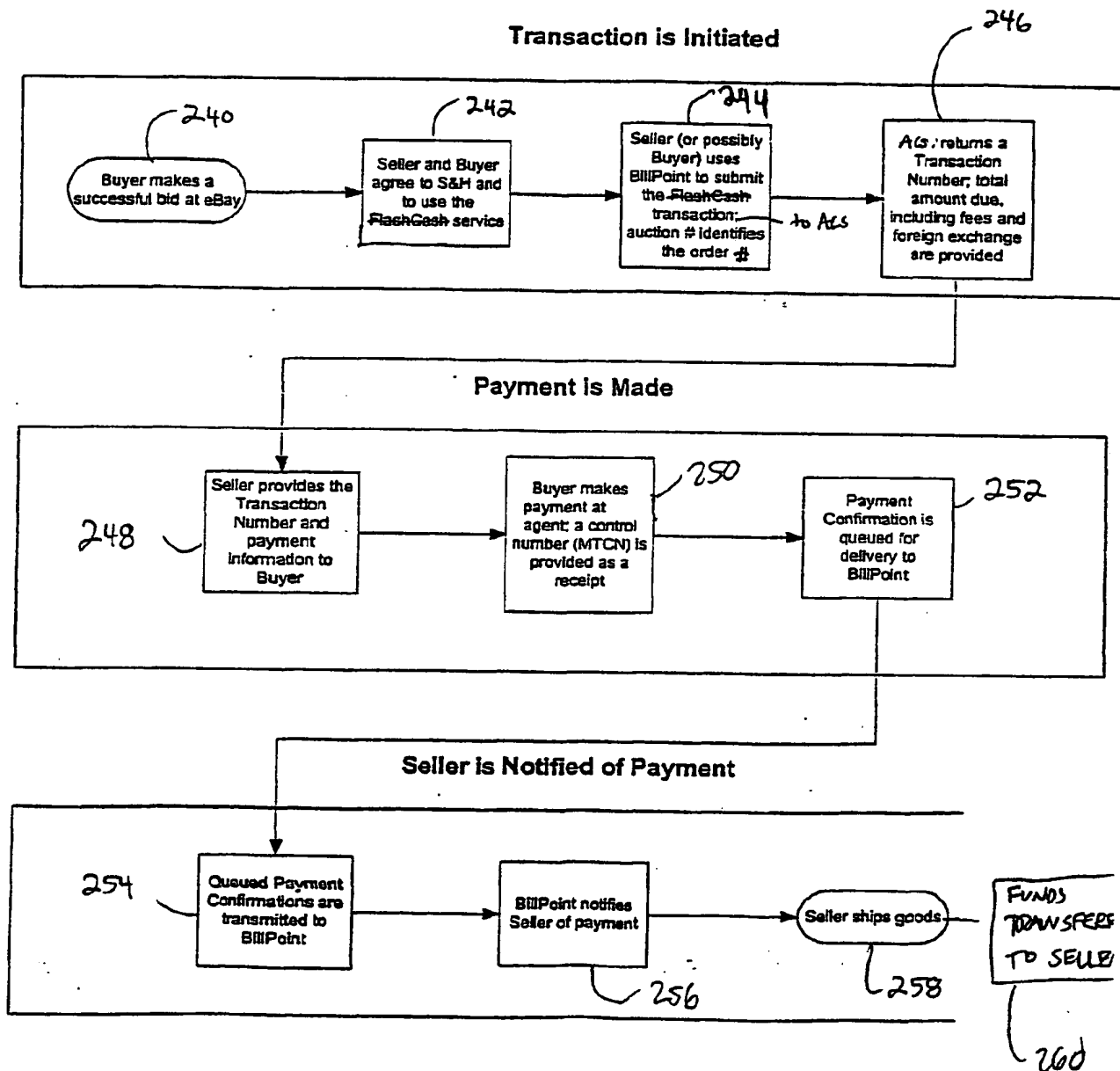
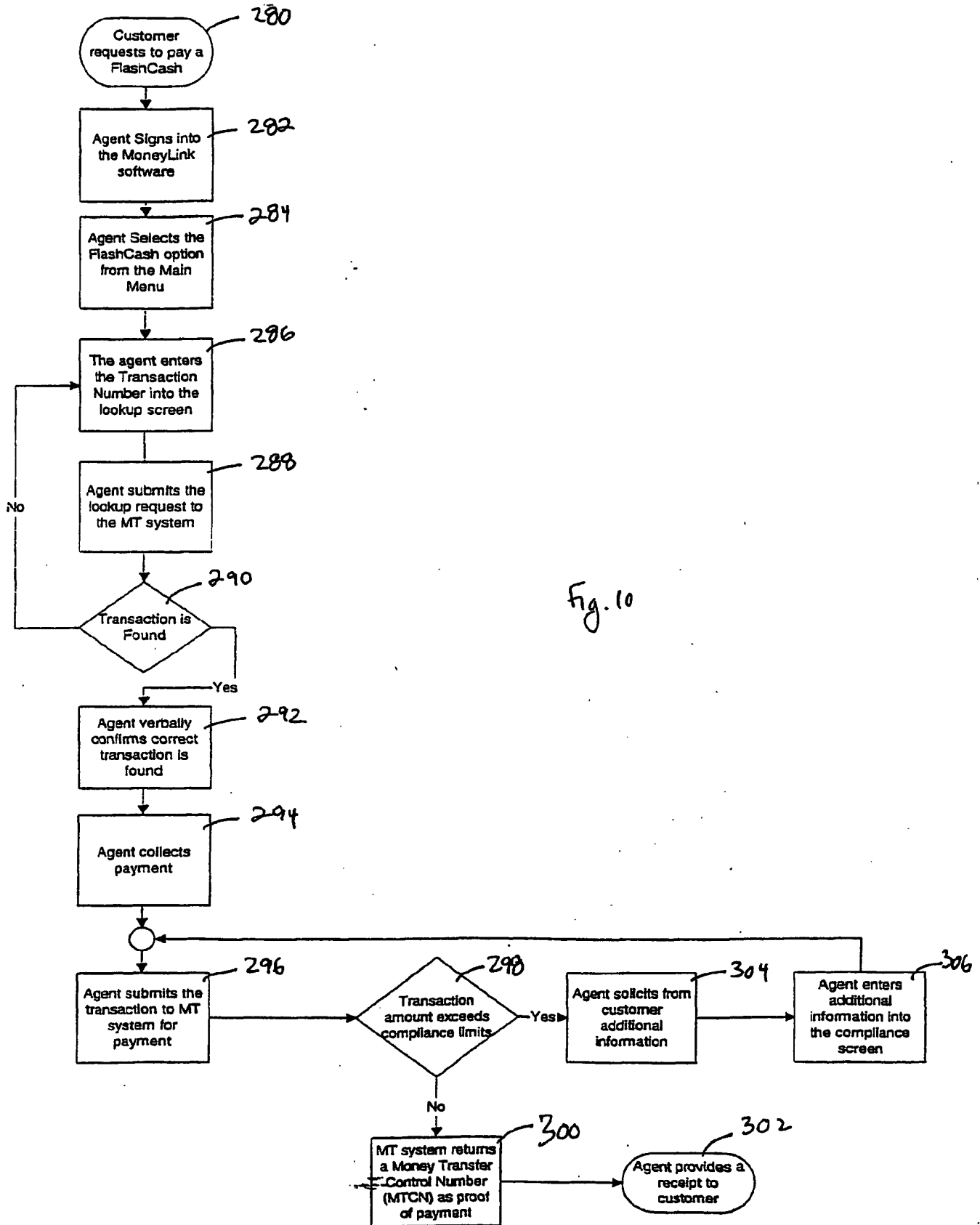


Fig. 9



FlashCash

Transaction No. 83313197

Amount: .00

Esc-Cancel F10-Proceed

ATTENTION

Display
your broadcast
message here
if you
would like to

Please Enter Transaction Number

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10

HELP || 100 || WLUA

Fig. 11A

ATP.EXE FLASHCASH

Sender: ROBERT L MARTIN
Telephone: (888) 426-7306

Receiver: MICRO SIX TEST ACCOUNT
Order #: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Attn:

Exchange rate: .24 Dollars per Zloty
Expected payout amount: 86.00 Dollars

Financial Summary

Send Amount	354.66
Charge	16.50
Amount to Collect	371.16

Additional Services
Sender/Receiver Info

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10
HELP MENU SEND

Fig. 11B

GATP.EXE

FLASHCASH

Sender: ROBER
Telephone: (888)

Receiver: MICRO

Order #: MTCN: 121-000-8562
Attn: Time: 352P
Destination Currency: 86.00 Dollar
Exchange rate: Net Foreign Exchange Rate: .24
Expected payout amo

Enter-OK

Financial Summary

Send Amount	354.66
Charge	16.50
Amount to Collect	371.16

Additional Services

Sender/Receiver Info

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10
HELP MENU SEND

100 WLU

Fig. 11C

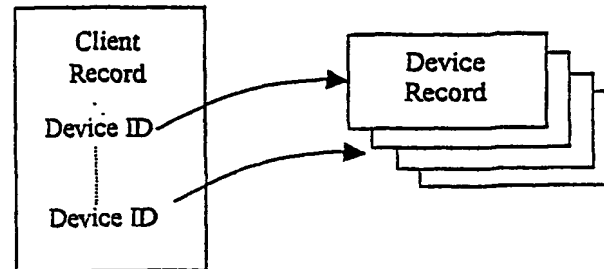


FIG. 12

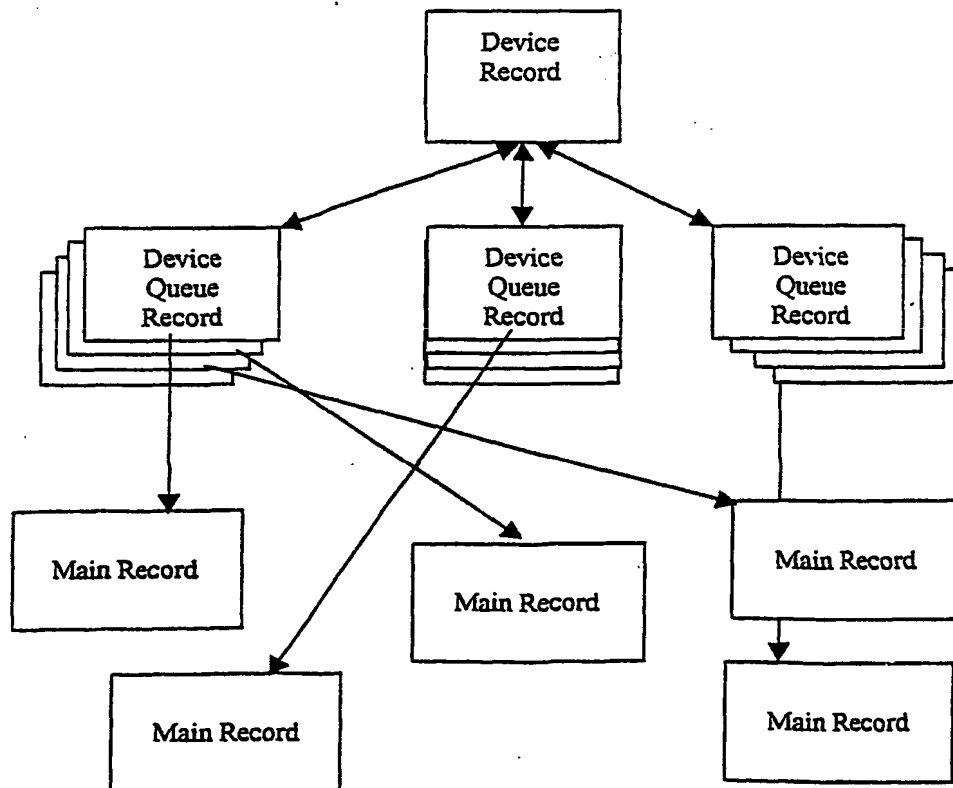


FIG. 13

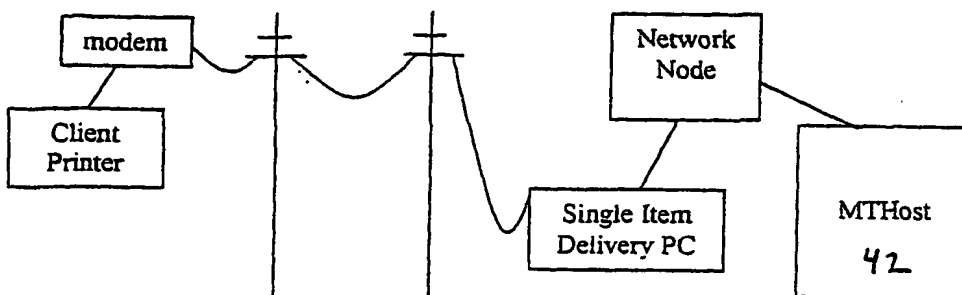


Fig. 14

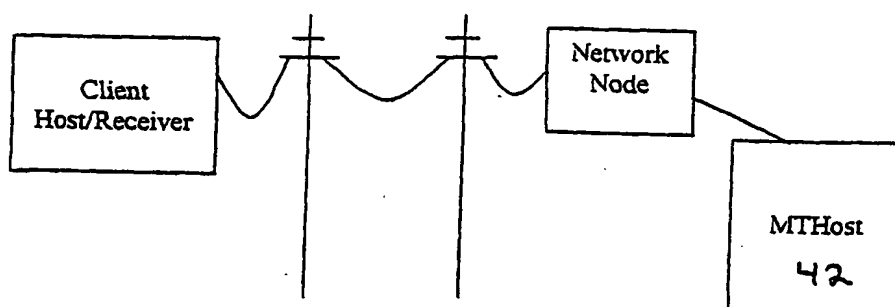


Fig. 15

PCT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 10722- 34928	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(day/month/year) 20/09/2001
International application No. PCT/US 01/ 20482	International filing date(day/month/year) 27/06/2001	(Earliest) Priority date(day/month/year) 27/06/2000
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC		G06F17/60
Applicant WESTERN UNION FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.		


1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:

- a. ☐ scientific theories.
- b. ☐ mathematical theories
- c. ☐ plant varieties.
- d. ☐ animal varieties.
- e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
- f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
- g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
- h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
- i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
- j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
- k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
- l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
- m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.

2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
- ☐ the description ☐ the claims ☐ the drawings

3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
- ☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
- ☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

4. Further comments:

<p>Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority</p>  <p>European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016</p>	<p>Authorized officer</p> <p>María Rodríguez Nóvoa</p>
--	--

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The subject-matter claimed in claims 1 to 15 falls under the provisions of Article 17(2)(a)(i) and Rule 39.1(iii) PCT, such subject-matter relating to a method of doing business.

Any technological features referred to in such claims are commonplace technological features for implementing the business method claimed. With reference to Guidelines, B-VIII, points 1-6, the International Searching Authority considers that searching such commercial features would serve no useful purpose. This applies to the remaining commonplace technological features of these claims as well.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

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CORRECTED VERSION

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
3 January 2002 (03.01.2002)

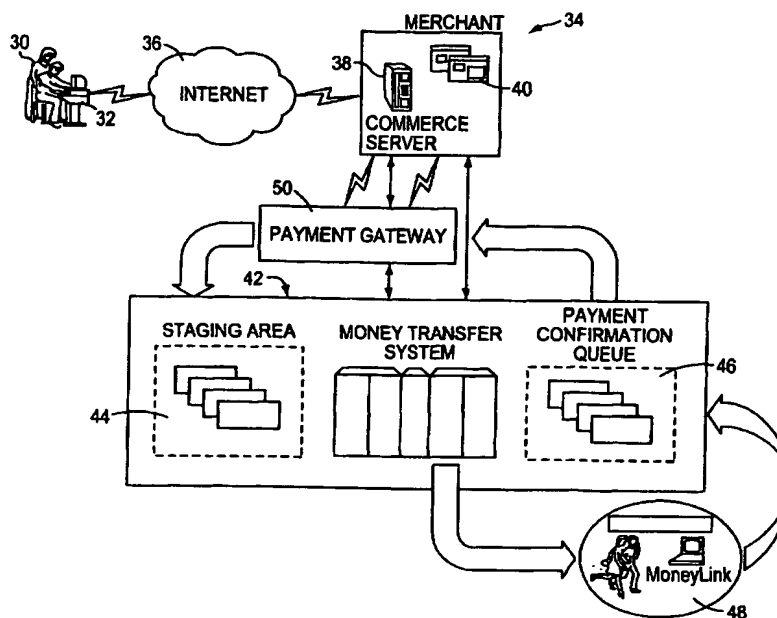
PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 02/001469 A2

- (51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F 17/60**
- (21) International Application Number: **PCT/US01/20482**
- (22) International Filing Date: **27 June 2001 (27.06.2001)**
- (25) Filing Language: **English**
- (26) Publication Language: **English**
- (30) Priority Data:
09/604,525 **27 June 2000 (27.06.2000)** **US**
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- (81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:
— with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract;
title not checked by the International Searching Authority

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD FOR FACILITATING PAYMENT OF A COMPUTERIZED TRANSACTION



(57) Abstract:

WO 02/001469 A2



(48) Date of publication of this corrected version:

6 March 2003

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(15) Information about Correction:

see PCT Gazette No. 10/2003 of 6 March 2003, Section II

METHOD FOR FACILITATING PAYMENT OF A COMPUTERIZED TRANSACTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates in general to a method for facilitating a payment
5 for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using a computer
network, such as the Internet.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

With the increased worldwide use of the Internet, a greater number of
businesses and merchants are creating "virtual" storefronts accessible to users
10 on the Internet. These merchants offer, for example, retail products ranging
from books, compact discs, and clothing to furniture, airline tickets, and
antiques, just to name a few. In fact, the Internet has become such a major
vehicle for electronic commerce that many Internet businesses display their
products and take orders from customers exclusively over the Internet. While
15 the Internet provides an effective means for merchants to promote, display, or
list their various products to an enormous market of potential customers, there
are only a few conventional methods by which a customer or buyer can pay the
merchant for any goods or services purchased electronically over the Internet.

Conventionally, an Internet user can purchase an item from a merchant
20 over the Internet using a credit card, or by a COD (cash on delivery) service,

or by check or money order, or the like. In the credit card payment method, buyers provide their confidential credit card information to the merchant over the Internet, and the merchant processes the transaction by charging the buyers' credit card. The credit card payment method has the disadvantage of
5 inaccessibility to all potential Internet purchasers, as every Internet user may not have a credit card account with a sufficient credit limit to complete a desired transaction. Further, many Internet users are reluctant to use the credit card payment method due to the perception that confidential credit card information may be intercepted, stolen, or otherwise misused when
10 communicated over the Internet. The conventional credit card payment method may be problematic for international customers for the same reasons.

An "electronic wallet/purse" payment method also exists, wherein for on-line purchases the consumer uses an Internet "wallet/purse" account which draws against an actual checking account, credit card, or debit card. This
15 approach also has limited usefulness for consumers who do not have checking accounts or credit cards, or for consumers who choose not wish to provide the checking account or credit card account information over the Internet to establish the virtual wallet/purse.

Further, merchants are often reluctant to accept credit card orders from
20 some foreign countries due to the possibility of fraud. Also, merchants wishing to sell products to U.S. and international consumers may be hampered by the merchant's inability to obtain and establish merchant credit card

processing accounts, particularly where the merchants are international merchants without an appropriate U.S. domicile.

Accordingly, what is needed is a method for facilitating the purchase of goods and services over the Internet by consumers who either do not have
5 credit card accounts, or choose not to provide confidential credit card account information or checking account information over the Internet. It with this background in mind that the present invention was developed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In light of the above, and according to a broad aspect of the invention,
10 disclosed herein is a method for facilitating a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using a computer network, such as the Internet. The method includes the steps of communicating, from a seller's computing station to an agent computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the
15 buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction. In one example, the agent computing system is a money transfer system having a computer and a database. The agent computing system communicates transaction information displayable to the buyer. In one example, the transaction information is sent to the seller's computing station, and the seller displays the transaction
20 information to the buyer on one or more pages of the seller's web site when accessed by the buyer. Receiving an actual payment from the buyer at a plurality of agent locations is provided for, the agent locations being in communication with the agent computing system. Upon receiving the actual

payment from the buyer at one of the agent locations, a message is communicated to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was received at the agent location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer. Funds are transferred to the seller, and in one
5 example, the agent computing system transfers funds into an account established with the seller.

In one embodiment, the transaction information includes a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction. The transaction information can also include an order number corresponding to
10 a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction; a new total price which is the amount of the transaction plus a processing fee due from the buyer payable at the agent location; and an exchange rate between a first local currency usable to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller. The total price of the transaction can be
15 expressed in the first local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay at the agent location in the buyer's local currency. Preferably the funds transferred to the seller from the agent computing system are paid in the second currency usable by the seller.

According to another broad aspect of the invention, disclosed herein is a
20 method for processing a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, wherein the transaction being initiated over a computer network such as the Internet. The method includes providing an agent computing system coupled to the computer network, the

agent computing system adapted to communicate with a seller's computing station over the computer network; providing a plurality of agent payment locations accessible to the buyer, the agent payment locations communicating with the agent computing system over the computer network; communicating, 5 from the seller's computing station to the agent computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction; communicating transaction information to the buyer from the agent computing system; providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at one of the 10 agent payment locations; and upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at one of the plurality of the agent payment locations, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was received at the agent payment location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer. Preferably, the agent computing system transfers funds to the seller 15 in a currency usable by the seller.

The foregoing and other features, utilities and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of a preferred embodiment of the invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 illustrates a block diagram of a system for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller using

a computer network, such as the Internet, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 illustrates the logical operations for a buyer/consumer to select the payment method for a computerized transaction in accordance with one
5 embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 3 illustrates the logical operations for an electronic transaction to be completed according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 illustrates a computer screen wherein an example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has selected an item to purchase by
10 an electronic transaction over the Internet.

Fig. 5 illustrates a computer screen wherein an example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has entered shipping information for the electronic transaction of Fig. 4.

Figs. 6A-D illustrate a series of exemplary computer screens wherein an
15 example of a merchant's web site is shown and the buyer/consumer has selected the payment method in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, and the confirmation information and transaction number are displayed to the buyer/consumer in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

20 Figs. 7A-B illustrate an example computer screen wherein information relating to agent locations is shown.

Fig. 8 illustrates an example of a form generated containing the electronic transaction information, the form being suitable for use by the agent

at the agent station, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 9 illustrates the logical operations of an alternative embodiment of the present invention for a buyer to select the payment method for a computerized transaction with a seller who uses a bidding process on the web site, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 10 illustrates the logical operations performed by an agent location in order to process an electronic payment transaction in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Figs. 11A-11C illustrate exemplary computer screen displays of a computer operating at the agent location.

Fig. 12 illustrates an example schema for the message delivery queuing system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 13 illustrates device queue records of the message delivery queuing system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 14 illustrates an example of a delivery mechanism for the agent computing system to communicate with an agent location, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 15 illustrates an example of a delivery mechanism for the agent computing system to communicate with an agent location, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In accordance with the embodiments of the present invention, a method for facilitating payment of a computerized transaction is disclosed herein. The method can be implemented using a computing system coupled to a network, such as the Internet. The method generally permits a customer/buyer to select an electronic payment method for a purchase, obtain confirmation information regarding the transaction, and provides for the customer/user to make an actual payment for the transaction at one of a plurality of payment locations accessible to the buyer. The actual payment is preferably a cash payment, although the payment could also be in the form of a check, money order, credit card, or the like.

Upon receiving the payment from the buyer at one of the payment locations, the seller is notified over the Internet that the actual payment for the transaction was received at a payment location, and the seller can then ship the purchased items to the buyer. In this manner, a buyer can use the payment method of the present invention to pay for an item purchased over a computer network without the need for having to use a credit card, and without having to provide confidential information, such as a credit card account number or a bank account number, over the Internet.

Referring to Fig. 1, a block diagram of a system for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction is shown, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

A buyer or customer 30, having a buyer's computing station 32, communicates with a merchant's or seller's computing system 34 over a computer network 36, such as the Internet. The merchant or seller's computing system 34 can include a server 38 which hosts the merchant's web site 40 for access by a plurality of potential buyers over the Internet. The merchant's web site 40 is, in accordance with the present invention, adapted to display an electronic payment method in accordance with the present invention, referred to herein as "FLASHCASH (SM)" or as the electronic payment method of the present invention. The merchant's web site 40 is adapted to display an icon, or other user-selectable indicia, to launch the electronic payment method described herein.

An agent computing system 42 (also referred to herein as a money transfer system) is also shown in Fig. 1, which is responsible for processing incoming requests from merchants or buyers regarding the electronic payment. In one example, the agent computing system 42 has a staging area 44 and a payment confirmation queue 46. The staging area 44 is used to queue and track incoming transaction requests. For instance, upon the buyer selecting an item for purchase and selecting the electronic payment method, the merchant's server 38 generates an electronic payment request which is transferred to the agent computing system 42. The agent computing system 42 receives the request, and creates a unique record of the request and stores the unique record in the staging area 44. Further operations performed by the agent computing system/money transfer system are described below.

The record includes data regarding the transaction, including, for example, the buyer's identification (such as a name, e-mail address, physical address, etc.), the seller's identification (the seller's name, physical address, phone number, e-mail address, etc.), the date of the transaction, a summary of the item or items being purchased, along with the purchase and shipping price for the items, and a total price for the transaction. Further, the agent computing system 42 assigns a unique transaction or confirmation number, to each incoming transaction request. This number is uniquely and permanently associated with the particular transaction during the life of the transaction. In one example, the transaction number is used as a reference number for the transaction until the transaction has been completed (i.e., the buyer has made the payment at the agent location). In one example, the uniqueness of the transaction number is limited from the time beginning when the transaction is initiated, to the time in which the buyer required to make the payment or once the payment has been made. After this time, the transaction number may be re-used by the agent computing system 42 to track another transaction. In one example, once the buyer makes the payment due, a money transfer control number, also being unique for each transaction, is provided as proof of payment or receipt.

Optionally, the agent computing system 42 can also associate an order number provided by the merchant for the merchant's tracking of the transaction. When the buyer has made an actual payment to one of the plurality of agent locations 48, the agent computing system 42 moves its

record of the transaction from the staging area 44 to the payment confirmation queue 46, so that the seller can be notified of the buyer's payment, and the funds can be transferred to the seller.

As will be described below, the agent computing system 42 can also
5 associate various exchange rates with the transaction based on the geographic location of either the buyer or the seller, and provide a calculated total price due by the buyer in a local currency usable by the buyer. In this manner, a buyer in a foreign country can purchase and employ the electronic payment method of the present invention to purchase an item using foreign currency,
10 while the seller is paid for the transaction using its own local currency. In one example, the currency information associated with the transaction by the agent computing system is derived from the shipping information (i.e., buyer's and seller's addresses) shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 1 also illustrates a plurality of agent locations 48 accessible to the
15 buyer. Agent locations 48 may include any device capable of communicating with the agent computing system 42 and transferring value to the agent computing system 42 to complete payment of the transaction. The agent locations 48 are, in one example, physical business locations wherein the buyer can walk into one of the agent locations in order to physically make an actual
20 payment in accordance with the present invention. In another example, agent locations 48 include stand-alone computing systems with money-transfer capabilities, such as an automatic teller machine (ATM) adapted to communicate with and transfer funds to the agent computing system 42.

Preferably, the agent locations 48 are located throughout cities and in various countries globally, so that a buyer can give an actual payment to one of the many agent locations 48 located throughout the world. Preferably, each agent location 48 is equipped with the capability to communicate, either by

5 computer network or otherwise, with the agent computing system 42 to reference any of the transactions stored in the agent computing system 42. For instance, the plurality of agent locations 48 can be provided with computing systems which are coupled to and in communication with the agent computing system 42 over a computer network, such as the Internet or other computing

10 network. Alternatively, other computing systems such as ATMs or the like can access the agent computing system 42.

A payment gateway 50 is also shown in Fig. 1. The payment gateway 50 is a means by which merchants optionally handle the processing of orders. Payment gateway 50 is generally provided to the merchant by a third-party

15 service provider, to process payments. For instance, the payment gateway known as "CyberCash" provides payment software and services enabling conventional electronic commerce for merchants. The payment gateway 50 is a means by which the merchant offloads the transaction processing which would normally be handled at the merchant's server. However, not all Internet

20 merchants use a third-party payment gateway. For example, at present, the amazon.com merchant web site has its own internal payment gateway for processing payments.

Hence, communications to and from the agent computing system 42 and the merchant's computing system 34 can be handled either by the payment gateway 50 or by the merchant's server 40 directly, depending upon the particular implementation chosen by the merchant. Accordingly, the
5 functionality of the merchant's computing system 34 to communicate with the agent computing system 42 and the merchant's particular payment gateway could be included within the merchant's computing system 34.

In overall general operation, and referring to Fig. 1, the buyer 30 makes a purchase using the buyer's computing station 32 over the Internet 36 by
10 accessing the merchant's web site 40, and the buyer selects the electronic payment method of the present invention as a way to pay for the purchase (instead of purchasing by using an credit card or other conventional means). The merchant's computing system 34 then communicates the transaction either to the payment gateway 50, or directly to the agent computing system 42,
15 depending upon the particular implementation, for processing by the agent computing system 42 in accordance with the present invention. The operations shown in Figs. 2-3 and the information shown in Figs. 4-9 further illustrate various aspects of the invention.

Referring now to Fig. 2, the logical operations for a buyer to select the
20 payment method under the present invention are shown. At operation 100, the buyer selects goods to be purchased and places the goods in a virtual shopping cart. At operation 102, the buyer proceeds to the checkout section of the merchant's web site. At operation 104, the buyer enters the appropriate

shipping information to have the goods delivered as the buyer desires, and at operation 106, the buyer selects the desired shipping method. At operation 108, the charges relating to the transaction (including the cost of the goods and the shipping charges) are totaled.

5 At operation 110, the buyer selects the desired method of payment for the transaction. Decision operation 112 determines if the electronic payment method of the present invention has been selected. If no, then operation 114 submits the order to the merchant for processing as is conventionally performed. However, if decision operation 112 determines that the electronic
10 payment method of the present invention has been selected by the buyer, then operation 116 re-totals the charges to include a processing fee associated with the present invention. Operation 118 then submits the order to the merchant, and submits the order to the agent computing system in accordance with the present invention. At operation 120, the agent computing system logs the
15 transaction and generates a confirmation number, which is preferably communicated to the merchant and to the consumer preferably through the merchant. The agent computing system 42 may communicate confirmation information using a variety of communications methods, such as, for example, facsimile transmission, automated telephonic response units, E-mail, personal
20 digital assistants (PDAs), or the like.

Referring to Fig. 3, the logical operations for the completion of an electronic transaction are illustrated according to one embodiment of the present invention. In response to a request to initiate a transaction, the agent

computing system creates a "will pay" transaction and generates a confirmation number at operation 130. The "will pay" transaction is the internal record to the agent computing system which contains the information regarding the particular transaction, including the buyer's information, the seller's
5 information, and a unique confirmation number associated with the transaction. At operation 132, the agent computing system passes the confirmation number to the merchant via the payment gateway, or directly to the merchant's server. At operation 134, the merchant passes the confirmation number to the consumer along with an order acknowledgment.

10 One feature of the present invention is that the agent computing system can optionally track the timeliness of the payment by the consumer. Decision operation 136 determines whether the consumer completes the transaction within an allotted number of days, as governed by an agreement between the merchant and the consumer. Operation 136 can be easily performed by the
15 agent computing system through the use of a timer or date stamps associated with the transaction. In this manner, the agent computing system can track whether a particular transaction has become "stale" or whether the transaction can still be completed by timely payment of the consumer. It is understood, however, that operation 136 is optional.

20 At operation 138, the consumer visits any agent location worldwide, and provides the agent location with the confirmation number associated with the particular transaction. At operation 140, the agent location references the confirmation number to determine the total amount due from the consumer.

This amount due can be expressed either in the same currency as used by the seller, or in a local currency usable by the buyer.

At operation 142, the consumer pays at the agent location, preferably using cash. However, the agent location could also be equipped to securely
5 accept credit cards, checks, or other forms of payment. In this manner, the consumer has made a payment at a physical location, as opposed to having to communicate confidential credit card account information or checking account information over the Internet.

At operation 144, the agent computing system creates a "have paid"
10 transaction, indicating that the consumer has paid the amount due for a particular transaction. At operation 146, the agent computing system notifies the payment gateway or the merchant directly to indicate to the merchant that the payment has been received. Preferably, the notification operation 146 is performed as quickly as possible, and preferably over a high-speed computer
15 link, so that the merchant is promptly informed of the payment by the buyer.

At operation 148, in response to receipt of the notification of the buyer's payment, the seller initiates the shipment of the order of the item to the buyer.

At operation 150, the funds for the transaction are transferred to the seller to complete the transaction, under the direction of the agent computing system.

20 The amount of the funds transferred to the seller are, in one example, the purchase price plus the shipping costs, and in another example, discounted by a transaction fee and/or a percentage fee of the transaction. It is understood that operation 150 could occur in parallel with operations 144 and 146. The funds

transferred by operation 150 can be in a currency usable by the seller, such currency being the same or different currency as provided by the buyer at operation 142. In this way, purchasers in a foreign country can effect the transaction using currencies local to the purchasers but different than that used
5 by the seller if the seller is located in a different country.

In one embodiment, if the consumer does not complete the transaction within the allocated number of days, the agent computing system can optionally cancel the transaction at operation 152, and at operation 154 optionally notify the payment gateway, or the merchant directly, that the
10 transaction has been cancelled. At operation 156, the merchant optionally notifies the consumer that the transaction was cancelled due to the buyer's failure to provide a timely payment, and further that no goods will be shipped or services provided in accordance with the transaction.

Figs. 4-7 illustrate examples of display screens as displayed to a
15 purchaser through the merchant's web site. Referring to Fig. 4, an example merchant's web site 180 is shown with an item 182 for purchase. Referring to Fig. 5, the merchant's web page 180 is shown which queries for shipping information 184A from the buyer, including the buyer's name, the buyer's address, the buyer's country, and other information such as the buyer's
20 telephone number. The buyer provides that information to the merchant through shipping web page 180 of Fig. 5.

Product and shipping cost field 186 indicates the subtotal for the purchase of the items 182. Web page 180 of Fig. 5 preferably includes an

indication of the number of items being purchased and the cost per item, as well as the shipping costs associated with the transaction.

Referring to Figs. 6A-E, the merchant's web site then displays a series of web pages regarding the electronic payment in accordance with one
5 embodiment of the present invention. Referring to Fig. 6A, the merchant web page 180 displays the information 182 about the item(s) selected for purchase by the buyer, fields 184B regarding billing information, field 186 showing the cost of the items and shipping, and payment method fields 188 having a variety of user selectable fields 190A, 190B, 190C, 190D which provide the user with
10 various payment methods. In accordance with the present invention, the user selectable field 190B provides the buyer with the option to pay for the transaction using the methods described herein.

Upon the user selecting the electronic payment method association with field 190B, the information is displayed to the buyer about the transaction so
15 that the buyer can proceed with completing the transaction using the electronic payment method of the present invention.

Referring now to Fig. 6B, the merchant web page displays further information regarding the electronic payment method of the present invention. A payment method indicator field 192 indicates and confirms to the buyer that
20 the electronic payment method of the present invention has been selected. A link 194 is provided for information regarding the electronic payment method so that the purchaser can obtain information, details, and answers to frequently asked questions. A link 196 provides the buyer with information relating to

the geographic addresses of the agent locations where the buyer can complete the transaction. For instance, as shown in Fig. 7A, information regarding agent locations can be provided to the user in geographic locations specified by the user. More specific information about a particular agent location can
5 also be provided, such as the information shown in Fig. 7B.

Referring back to Fig. 6B, merchant web page 180 also displays exchange rate information 198 between the currency of the seller and the currency local to the buyer. A purchase total field 200 is expressed in the local currency and converts the amount in field 186 (cost of the items being
10 purchased plus shipping costs, as expressed in the seller's currency) into an amount expressed in the local currency of the buyer.

A transaction fee field 202 indicates the cost to the buyer for using the electronic payment service provided by the agent computing system and the plurality of agent locations. In one example, the transaction fee field is
15 expressed in the local currency of the buyer. A grand total field 204 indicates the total amount to be paid by the buyer to the agent location nearest the buyer, in order to complete the transaction. Preferably, the grand total field 204 is expressed in the same currency as used by the buyer. In one example, the amount shown in fields 200, 202 and 204 are based upon a current
20 exchange rate and calculated by the agent computing system at the time the transaction is being processed thereby. By expressing the product prices in the currency of the seller and the purchase costs (i.e., fields 200, 202 and 204) in

the currency of the buyer, international transactions are more easily facilitated by the present invention.

A "complete checkout" user-selectable control 205 is provided so that the buyer can complete the on-line portion of the transaction. Upon the user
5 selecting the control 205, the transaction is processed and information regarding the transaction obtained from the merchant's web pages (i.e., Figs. 5 and 6A-B) is sent to the agent computing system/money transfer system 48 and processed therein, as described in operations 116, 118, and 120 in Fig. 2 and operations 130, 132, and 134 of Fig. 3.

10 After the agent computing system has assigned a confirmation number to the transaction and compiled the other information regarding the transaction, the agent computing system communicates this information to the merchant's server for communication to the buyer as shown in Figs. 6C-D. In Figs. 6C-D, the merchant's web site displays an "order confirmation" page
15 which contains a variety of information fields. A confirmation number field 208 is displayed within the order confirmation page which shows the transaction number created by the agent computing system and uniquely assigned to this transaction. A shipping information field 184A contains the shipping data as previously specified by the buyer, and billing information
20 184B specified by the buyer is also preferably displayed.

An instruction field 206 is also displayed within an "order confirmation" section of the merchant's web page 180 (shown in Fig. 6C). The instruction field 206 preferably indicates that the buyer should print a copy of the order

confirmation page, or at a minimum write down the confirmation number shown in field 208, for later use. The buyer is instructed to take this information, together with the payment, to the nearest agent payment location. A link 196 to a list of the nearest agent payment locations is also provided on
5 page 180, for ease of use by the buyer. An information link 194 about the electronic payment method can also be displayed within page 180 of Figs. 6C and 6D.

While Figs. 6A-D show a number of fields and links containing a variety of information, it is understood that the information can be displayed in
10 different combinations or throughout one or more web pages of the merchant's web site, and additional information can be provided as well, if appropriate. For example, contact information regarding the seller, such as the seller's e-mail address, toll-free telephone number, fax number, web site address, and/or mailing address can also be included in the confirmation page display.

15 Upon the buyer making payment for the transaction at an agent payment location, a money transfer form can be generated by the agent payment location or by the agent computing system for transmission to the merchant seller. An example of such a money transfer form 218 is illustrated in Fig. 8. The form contains a sender field 220, identifying the name and address of the
20 buyer. A confirmation number field 222 is also indicated, as well as an optional order number field 224 corresponding to an order number specified by the merchant for identifying the transaction. This order number field 224 is communicated by the merchant's web server to the agent computing system as

part of the information communicated regarding the transaction when an electronic payment transaction is initially requested.

A total amount paid field 226 is also indicated on the money transfer form 218 which indicates the amount of money paid by the buyer at the agent
5 payment location.

Preferably, each Internet merchant adapts their web site to include an electronic payment option in accordance with the present invention. The merchant and the entity operating the agent computing system and the plurality of agent locations would agree to the terms and conditions of the services
10 being offered by the entity. The entity could then add and register the merchant within the agent computing system, as well as within the plurality of agent locations, so that the processing of the electronic payment transactions is simplified.

While the methods of the present invention have been described with
15 respect to computerized transactions initiated by a buyer over the Internet, it is understood that the same method could be applied if the buyer initiates the transaction using other sources. For example, a buyer could communicate with the merchant and place an order by telephone or fax, wherein the merchant would then generate an electronic payment transaction request as described
20 above. Additionally, a variety of computing input devices usable by the buyer are contemplated, including a conventional personal computer having web browsing capabilities, a cellular phone or personal digital assistant having web

browsing capabilities, or a kiosk or other computer input device computing with the merchant's server over a computer network such as the Internet.

The methods of the present invention have been described with respect to a merchant having a merchant server which controls the merchant's web
5 page or virtual storefront. However, the methods of the present invention can also be used to facilitate transactions between a buyer and a non-merchant seller, such as an individual selling an item on an auction web site (*e.g.*, eBay.com). In Fig. 9, the eBay auction web site is used as an example, along with the billpoint person-to-person credit card payment service provided on the
10 eBay web site.

In the example of Fig. 9, it is assumed that the BillPoint service has made the electronic payment method of the present invention available to the seller and buyer on eBay as one of the payment choices. Referring to Fig. 9, at operation 240 the buyer places a successful bid on the eBay web site, where
15 the seller has listed an item for sale by auction. At operation 242, the seller and buyer agree to use the "FlashCash" electronic payment of the present invention as the method of payment for the auction transaction.

At operation 244, the seller or buyer uses the BillPoint service of eBay to submit the transaction to the agent computing system shown in Fig. 1.
20 Information regarding the auction is passed to the agent computing system, such as the names and addresses of the buyers and sellers, the item purchased, the price preferably including shipping costs, the auction number, and the date.

At operation 246, the agent computing system assigns a unique confirmation number to this transaction, and communicates this confirmation number to the seller. Operation 246 also communicates the total amount owed payable by the buyer, and can express this amount in a local currency if appropriate, as previously described. At operation 248, the seller provides the transaction number and other payment information to the buyer, and at operation 250, the buyer pays the specified payment amount to the agent at one of the agent locations.

At operations 252-254, confirmation of the payment is communicated from the agent computing system to BillPoint on eBay in order to notify the seller of the buyer's payment. At operation 256, BillPoint notifies the seller that the payment was made by the buyer, so then at operation 258 the seller can ship the goods to the buyer. At operation 260, the funds received at the agent location for the purchase price and shipping costs are transferred to the seller under the direction of the agent computer system. As indicated previously, the funds can be transferred in a currency usable by the seller which is different from the currency used by the buyer.

Upon completion of the online portion of the transaction by the buyer, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 makes the transaction record available for access by any one of the plurality of agent locations 48 in order to complete the transaction. In particular, the transaction is completed after the buyer visits an agent location and tenders payment for the transaction, at which time the agent location accesses the transaction records stored at the

agent computing system/money transfer system 42. Fig. 10 illustrates the logical operations performed at the agent location for completing the transaction.

At operation 280 of Fig. 10, a buyer visits an agent location and
5 requests to complete the transaction by tendering payment (i.e., paying the grand total amount indicated in field 204 of Fig. 6C). At operation 282 and in one example, the local agent at the agent location initiates software operating on the agent's local computer. As will be described with reference to Figs. 14 and 15, the agent's local computer can be simple or complex, and is preferably
10 coupled to a network in communications with the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. At operation 284, the local agent initiates software operations which are adapted to obtain information regarding the electronic payment transaction particularly specified by the buyer at operation 280. At operation 286, the local agent enters the transaction
15 number/confirmation number (i.e., the transaction number indicated in field 208 of Fig. 6D) into a query screen, and operation 288, the local agent submits the query/request to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42.

Upon receiving the local agent's query/request, the agent computing
20 system/money transfer system 42 then searches its database for information relating to the transaction identified by the transaction/confirmation number specified by the local agent at operation 286. If the transaction is found, decision operation 290 passes control to operation 292. If, however, the

transaction is not found, decision operation 290 informs the local agent that the specified transaction number is invalid, whereupon the local agent can repeat operations 286-288 with a different transaction number.

Preferably, operations 282-288 are performed by a local agent having a
5 computing system connected over a network to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. It is understood, however, that operations 282-288 could be performed by a local agent communicating with the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 via facsimile, telephone, or other like means. Furthermore, it is understood that the local agent
10 functions could be integrated within the software of an automatic teller machine (ATM) or other like system.

At operation 292, the local agent can optionally verbally confirm, with a person having access to the records of the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, or with the buyer, that the correct transaction has been
15 found.

At operation 294, the local agent collects payment from the buyer for the transaction. The amount of the payment collected is preferably in the currency local to the buyer, and preferably corresponds to the amount specified in field 204 of Fig. 6C.

20 At operation 296, the local agent then submits a message or record to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 indicating that the buyer has tendered the payment for the transaction and that the local agent has received such payment.

Operation 298 determines if the transaction amount exceeds compliance limits (e.g., Texas compliance limit of \$1,000 on international transfers). If not, then control is passed to operation 300 wherein the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 returns a money transfer control number to
5 the local agent. The money transfer control number provides proof of payment for the buyer's records as well as the records of the local agent. At operation 302, the local agent provides a receipt to the buyer indicating that the transaction has been completed. The receipt, in one example, is preferably in the form as shown in Fig. 8.

10 If operation 298 determines that the transaction amount exceeds the compliance limits, then control is passed to operation 304 wherein the local agent solicits additional information from the buyer (e.g., occupation, social security number, and/or other identification). At operation 306, the local agent enters the additional information into the local agent's computing system
15 and transmits this information to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 for processing therein and approval thereof.

Upon completion of the transaction at operations 296, 300 and 302, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 transmits a message to the merchant's computing system indicating that payment for the transaction has
20 been received by the local agent 48. The agent computing system/money transfer system 42 preferably transfers funds to the merchant in the amount of the cost of the goods plus the cost of shipping, discounted by any transaction fees charged to the merchant. Preferably, the money transferred to the

merchant is transferred in the currency specified by the merchant. The merchant ships the goods purchased by the buyer to the buyer at the buyer's shipping address (for example, as specified in field 184 of Fig. 6D). The entire transaction is then complete.

5 Figs. 11A-11C illustrate exemplary computing screen displays at a local agent. As shown in Figs. 11A-11C, a variety of information relating to the transaction is made accessible to the local agent. Referring to Fig. 11A, the local agent enters the transaction number which the buyer presents to the local agent (i.e., the transaction number specified in field 208 of Fig. 6D). In
10 Fig. 11B, the local agent is then provided with information relating to the transaction, including information relating to the buyer, and information relating to the seller. Further, the exchange rate can be displayed, as well as a financial summary indicating the amount to collect from the buyer.

In Fig. 11C, after the local agent has received payment from the buyer,
15 the local agent transmits a message to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 that the payment has been received. In response, and as shown in Fig. 11C, a money transfer control number is generated by the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 and communicated to the local agent 48. The local agent then provides this money transfer control number to
20 the buyer as proof of the buyer's payment.

Preferably, a message delivery queuing system is used to communicate messages between, for instance, the merchant's computing system 34, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at

agent locations 48. The delivery queuing system is preferably implemented across the software devices employed by the merchant's computing system 34, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at agent locations 48. As described herein and depending on the flow direction of a particular message, the merchant computing system 34, the agent computing system/money transfer system 42, and one or more agents at agent locations 48 can be senders or receivers of a message.

The queuing system separates the many pieces of a messaging system to allow independent customization at the point where it is needed. The form and method of the initial capture are not captive to the output format or technology. The messages may be in any of several formats depending on sender preferences, receiver requirements, message type, output hardware and communications protocol. The receiver (in one example, the agent at the agent location 48) preferably may receive the message directly from the money transfer system 48, or it may be delivered through some other delivery system. The message output may occur as soon as possible after receipt of another message or it may be scheduled to match the receiver's hours of operation.

The queuing system allows for the initiation of several output messages as a consequence of actions taken on a money transfer or message. The sender is relieved of the knowing many of the delivery requirements of the receiver even if the delivery mechanism should change between receipt of the input and the delivery of the output.

The output message sent to the receiver is delivered singly during the hours specified or in a batch as specified by the receiver. The message output may be routed directly upon selection of this receiver by the sender at recording time. Alternatively, the sender may provide the message type and
5 the receiver's address and the system will route the output through a third party delivery system, for example.

Each sender interaction with the system is captured in one of two types of message records. These records contain the sender information, identify the recipient and the means to get the message to the recipient, and the message
10 itself. Preferably, each of these records is uniquely identified by a control number, and duplicate control numbers are not allowed. Valid control numbers are guaranteed to identify exactly one message record.

The delivery queuing system is preferably implemented using CODASYL database structures and memory resident data extracted from these
15 records. Using the member-owner relationship, sorted sets, and key data that uniquely identifies records, an efficient and highly controllable mechanism is built. The queuing system preferably functions in real time.

Each "client" computing system (i.e., the merchants' computing system or the computing system operating at the agent location 48) or third party
20 delivery system is uniquely identified within the system as a "client" record. These message recipients can be made available to the sender via a pull down list of aliases shown at recording time. In one example, third party delivery

systems are not explicitly identified by the sender but are merely the vehicle through which a message will be routed.

As shown in Fig. 12, within the client record is a list of device identifiers to which the output for this client should be queued. Each of these
5 device identifiers is the key to a "device" record. The device record reflects the format in which the message is to be delivered to the receiver. Device records are also configured as being in a certain "class" as determined by the needs and limits of the client's receiving mechanism. Depending on the capabilities of the client, the device record may allow only one or several
10 message deliveries to be outstanding at any time depending in part upon the sophistication and technology of the computing systems involved and the volume of traffic. Each record allows for delivery times to be customized to serve the needs of the client.

Preferably, the memory image of the device record is updated whenever
15 the database device record is updated. This may be through a database maintenance routine update, the arrival of a new item for delivery to this device, moving an item to the "delivery in progress" queue, or completion of the delivery, for example.

As shown in Fig. 13, in one example, attached to the device record are
20 three ordered sets of "device queue" records. Messages are queued for delivery through this device by placing the unique message control number in a device queue record that is owned by the device record. These three sets represent

messages awaiting delivery, messages currently being delivered, and messages awaiting confirmation of delivery.

Senders may put messages into the system through several channels. For example, a voice-originated message may be entered via a terminal operated by an operator. Alternatively, an agent may enter the message using a terminal located at his storefront. Individual messages may be collected together and delivered to the agent computing system/money transfer system 42 from a third party messaging business. Preferably, all sources connect to the agent computing system/money transfer system 48 by way of one of the network nodes.

Depending upon the client or third party receiver's volume and level of technology, delivery of the message may be done on an item by item basis or a bulk delivery may be done at specified intervals during the day.

As shown in Fig. 14, smaller clients with low technology levels and low volumes may be set up with a modem and a printer, for example, to act as single item delivery boxes. The printer may be loaded with special paper, check stock for instance. A personal computer for example, with up to 28 output ports configured, acts as a single item delivery computer and requests work based on its configuration parameters and port availability. These parameters match the class of the device record. The single item delivery computer communicates with a Network Node via a high-speed LAN connection.

As shown in Fig. 15, for bulk delivery of messages, large volume clients may receive a file containing any number of message items using higher speed connections. These deliveries may be scheduled to occur several times per day and at times depending upon the day of the week. For these clients, the
5 network node stands in for the single item delivery box and periodically requests the messages from the database server. The messages are collected until the first message recording time which occurs after the opening of a delivery window.

As shown in Figs. 14 and 15, the network nodes provide security for the
10 database server of the agent computing system/money transfer system 42. Preferably, all delivery system interactions occur through a network node, and there are several network nodes and each backs up the other nodes to provide a robust, reliable network with extremely high availability.

Preferably and in one example, the agent computing system/money
15 transfer system 42 is implemented as a plurality of delivery computers coupled to a database server with a money transfer host computer coordinating operations. The database server is the repository for the message records, and ensures delivery of each record, tracks the time delay between recording and delivery, forces delivery in order of recording, extracts the relevant data to be
20 included in the output message, and allows for redelivery of an item where necessary. The message delivery process is initiated by the delivery computers connected to the database server via network nodes or by the network nodes themselves. Each delivery box and network node can request work from

different classes of devices. This allows load balancing, redundancy and efficient use of limited hardware. Positive acknowledgement of delivery of a message by the delivering computer to the database server causes the queued item to be removed from the queue and marked as delivered. The network
5 nodes offer other methods of connectivity and larger bandwidth for bulk delivery of items.

Each delivery computer is preferably configured with several modems and communications lines, with each of these ports configured for a class of traffic which identifies modem speed and type. When the port is available for
10 work, the delivery computer requests a delivery item for that class, and this request is passed by the network node to the money transfer host computer of the agent computing system/money transfer system 48.

Preferably, the money transfer host computer processes single item and bulk delivery requests independent of the others wherein several threads of
15 execution of the same routine may run concurrently with the class of work requested determining which of these routines is executed.

A delivery acknowledgement may be included in the request for work. This acknowledgement contains the control number of the delivered item and provides a positive indication of successful delivery to the receiving device.
20 On the money transfer host computer, the delivery acknowledgement causes the device queue record for the just delivered item to be removed from the queue and the main record to be updated with a delivered status. The acknowledgement may also indicate that no more deliveries can be attempted

on this device on this connection. This would be, for example, due to the receiving device capacity limitations.

If the receiving device class and the number of deliveries completed on this connection indicate that another item may be delivered, the awaiting
5 delivery queue for this device is examined. If there is another item on the queue, it is selected for delivery and the device record status is updated to reflect this. If there are no more items on the queue, a "no work" response is returned to the requesting delivery computer.

The money transfer host computer preferably maintains a list of all the
10 single item delivery devices in memory along with the device class, number of items queued for delivery, delivery hours, and the device status. When a request for work comes in, a search is performed through the list of devices from the device record which was last selected. The first device in the specified class, with device queue records on the awaiting delivery queue, and
15 currently open for deliveries is selected and the device ID is passed to the requesting program.

The frequency of requests for work from an idle port diminishes as "no work" responses are returned by the money transfer host computer, which reduces the resources consumed processing non-productive inquiries.

20 For clients with large volumes and a richer assortment of technology it may be more practical to collect the single delivery items into files of several thousands. In this process, the network nodes stands in for the delivery computers and requests work for a specific client. There may be several

deliveries in progress concurrently so that the data may be collected faster. These files are then sent to the money transfer host computer according to the needs of the receiving client. Preferably, the same process of marking a delivery queue item for "delivery in progress" and updating the main record occur for these items also.

Preferably aspects of the invention can be embodied in a computer program product, and aspects of the invention described herein can be implemented as logical operations in a computing system. The logical operations, or portions thereof, can be implemented (1) as a sequence of computing implemented steps running on the computing system and (2) as interconnected machine modules within the computing system. The implementation is a matter of choice dependent on the performance requirements of the computing system implementing the invention. Accordingly, the logical operations making up the embodiments or aspects of the invention described herein are referred to variously as operations, steps, or modules.

While the methods disclosed herein has been described and shown with reference to particular steps performed in a particular order, it will be understood that these steps may be combined, sub-divided, or re-ordered to form an equivalent method or methods without departing from the teachings of the present invention. Accordingly, unless specifically indicated herein, the order and grouping of the steps is not a limitation of the present invention.

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various other changes in the form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

We claim:

1. A method for facilitating a transfer of a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, comprising:

communicating, from a seller's computing station to an agent computing
5 system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the transaction;

communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer from the agent computing system;

10 providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at an agent location, said agent location being in communication with said agent computing system; and

upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at the agent location, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the transaction was
15 received at the agent location, thereby permitting the seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
transferring funds to the seller.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an order number corresponding to a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a new total price which is the amount of the transaction plus a processing fee due from the buyer payable at the agent location.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of communicating transaction information displayable to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an exchange rate between a first local currency usable to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller;

5 communicating a total price of the transaction, the total price being expressed in the first local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay at the agent location in said first local currency.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller in said second currency usable by the seller.

8. A method for processing a payment for a computerized transaction between a buyer and a seller for the purchase of an item, the transaction being initiated over a computer network, comprising:

providing an agent computing system coupled to said computer
5 network, the agent computing system adapted to communicate with a seller's
computing station over the computer network;

providing a plurality of agent payment locations accessible to the buyer,
the agent payment locations communicating with the agent computing system
over the computer network;

10 communicating, from the seller's computing station to the agent
computing system, data regarding the transaction between the buyer and the
seller, wherein the data identifies the buyer, the seller, and the amount of the
transaction;

communicating transaction information to the buyer from the agent
15 computing system;

providing for receiving an actual payment from the buyer at one of said
agent payment locations; and

upon receiving the actual payment from the buyer at the agent payment
location, communicating to the seller that the actual payment for the
20 transaction was received at the agent payment location, thereby permitting the
seller to begin shipment of the item to the buyer.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
transferring funds to the seller.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating
transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating a confirmation number created by the agent computing system for identifying the transaction.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an order number corresponding to a merchant order number provided by the merchant for identifying the transaction.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

communicating an exchange rate between a first currency local to the buyer and a second currency usable by the seller, so that the buyer can pay
5 using the first local currency.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

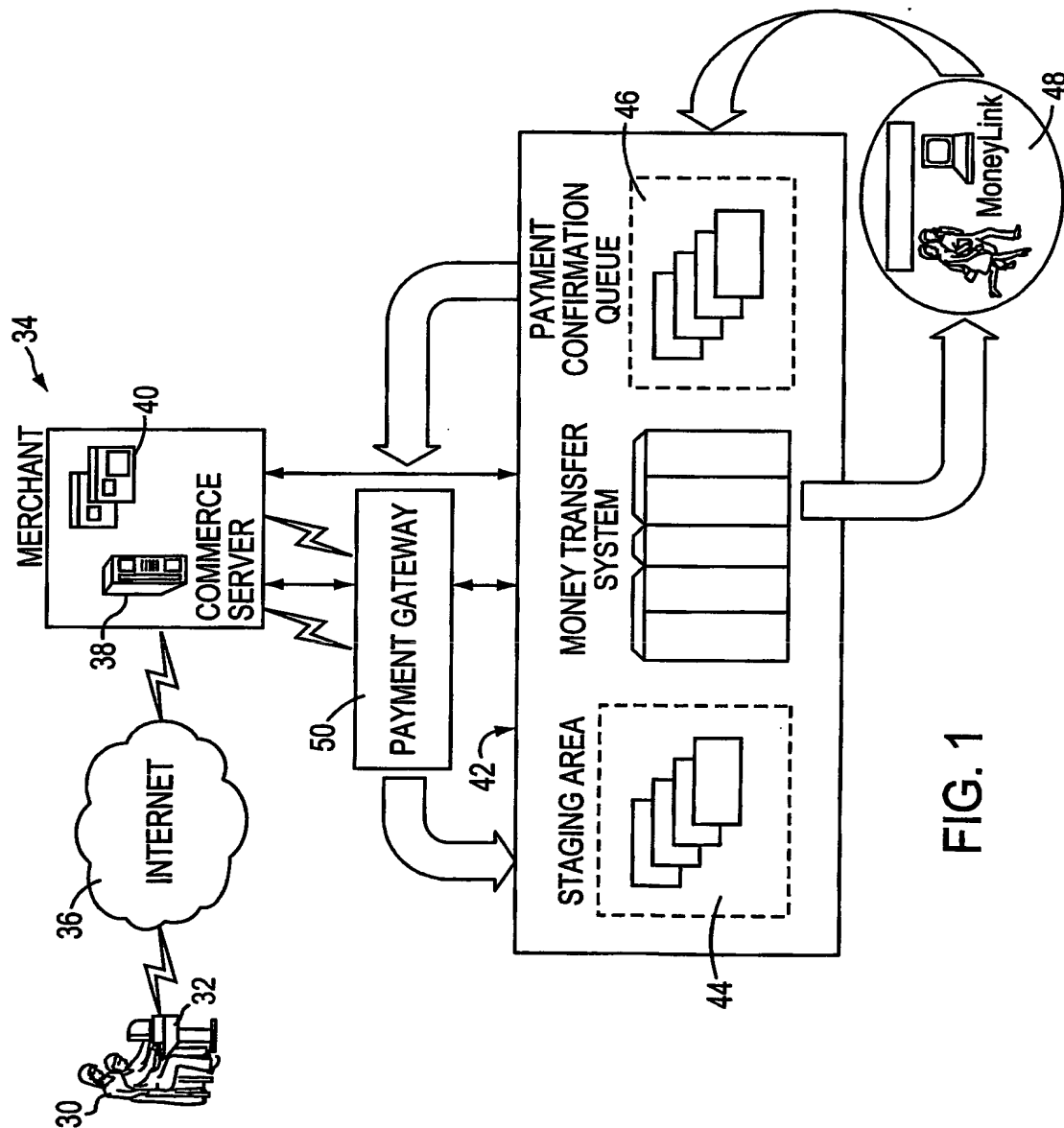
transferring funds to the seller in said second currency usable by the seller.

14. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of communicating transaction information to the buyer further comprises:

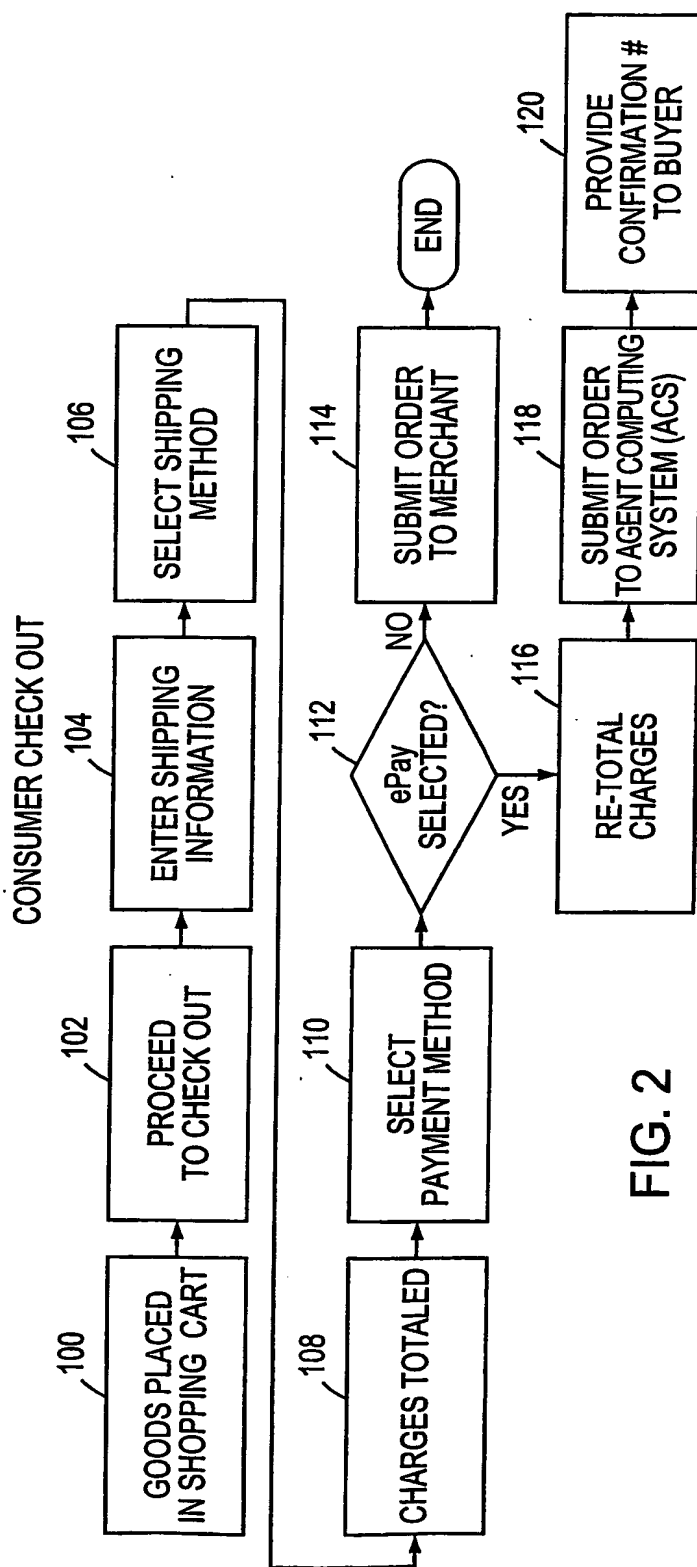
communicating a total price of the transaction expressed in a local currency usable by the buyer, so that the buyer can pay using the local
5 currency.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

transferring funds to the seller in a second currency usable by the seller.



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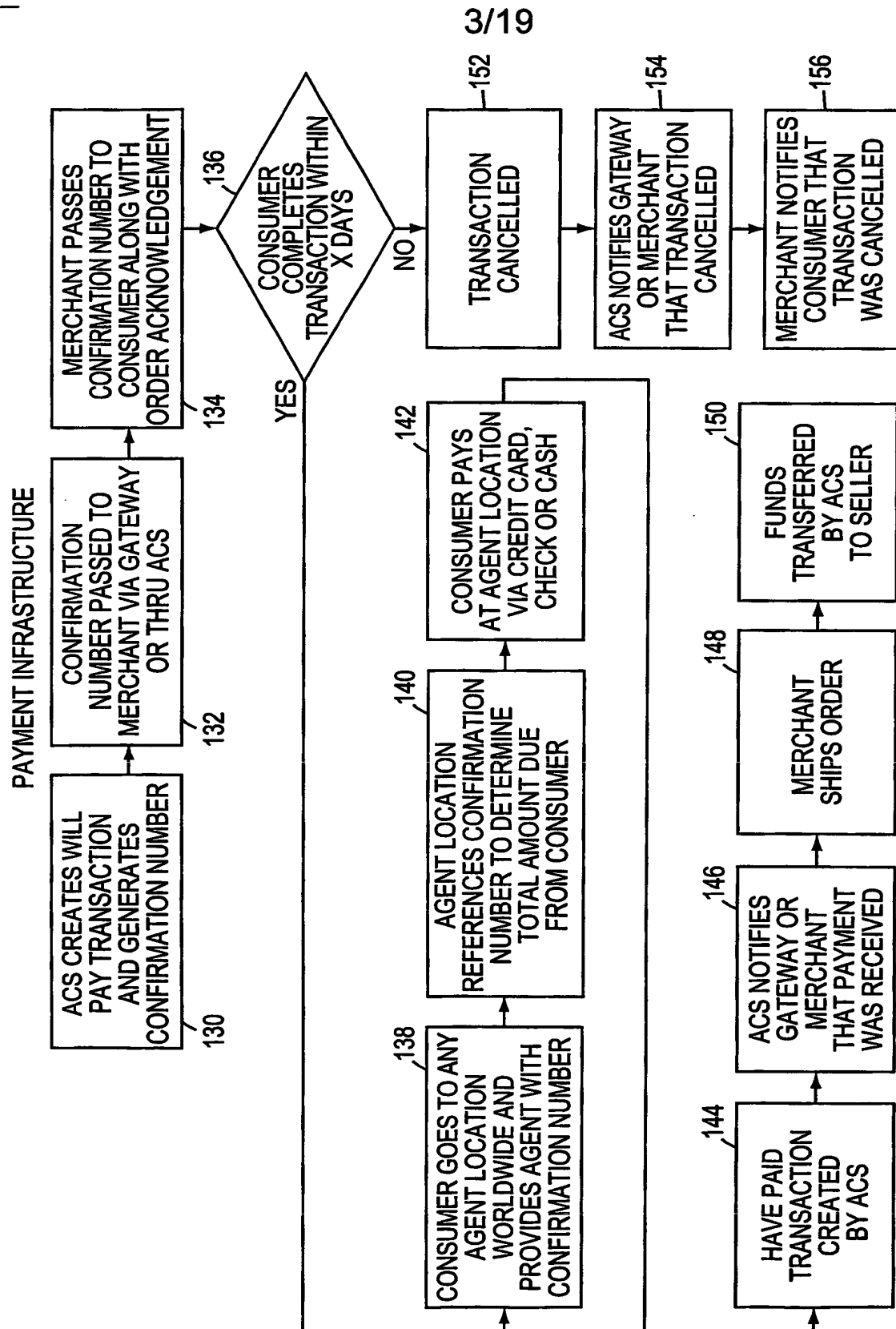
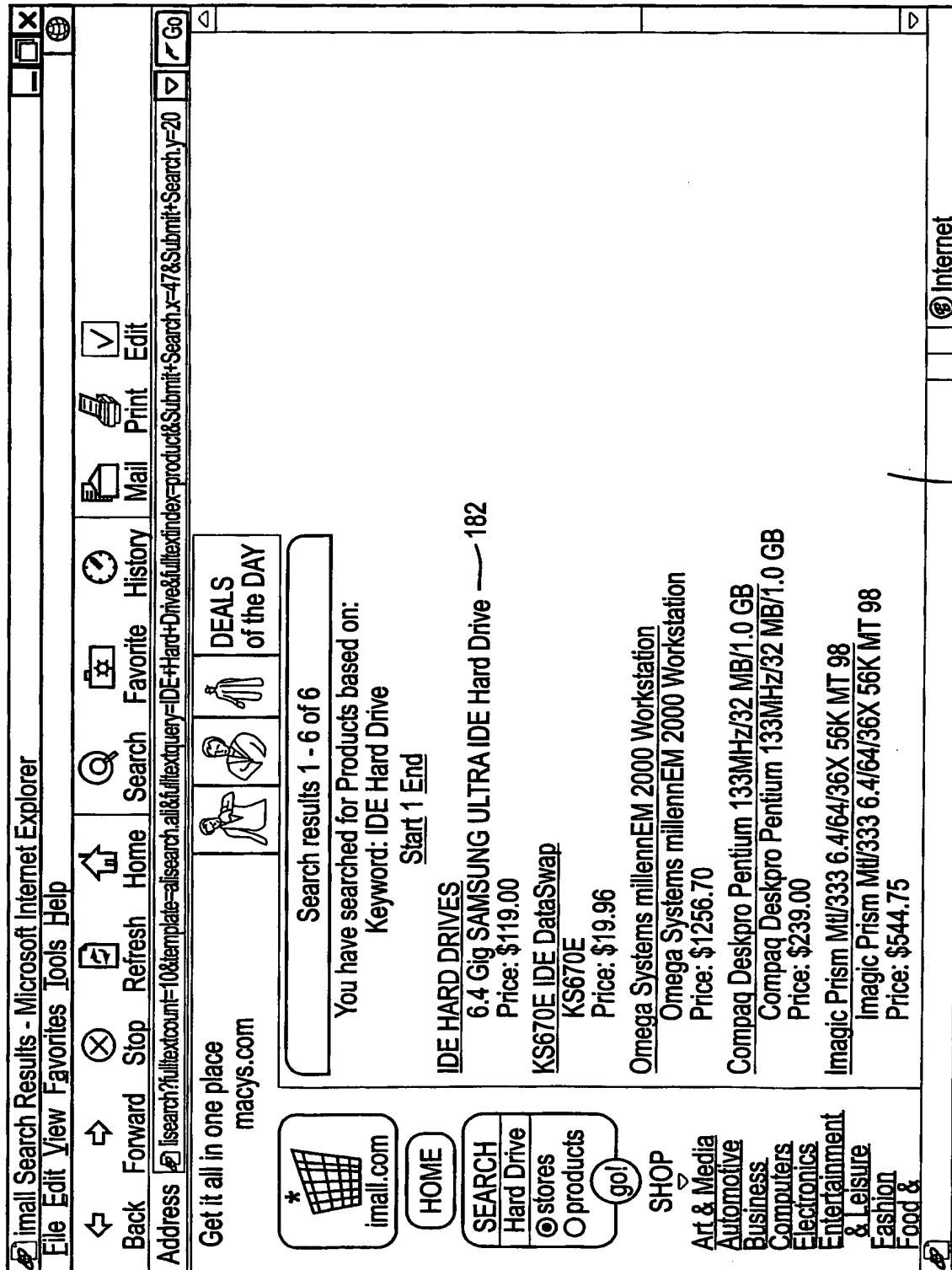


FIG. 3

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180

FIG. 4

+

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check out
Shipping

powered by imail

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"



Det	Product Description	Qty	Unit Price	Price
	IDE HARD DRIVES	3	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00

182 Samsung 3.5 inch Internet Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!

SKU: 123-456789

Shipping: \$ 8.00

Subtotal: \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax: \$ 0.00



186

Please fill in shipping information below
and click "Ready to Pay"

For a gift order, you may add a greeting,
a brief message and your name or group

Ship To Information

Gift... Personalized Message

Name Message To Address 1 Body of Message Address 2 Message From

184A City

State or Province Zip/Postal Code Country Day Phone Eve. Phone Instructions or Comments

Continue ☒
...ready to pay

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FIG. 5

+

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check out Billing

My Account About Security

180 powered by imall

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

Return to Shipping	Det	Product Description	Qty	Unit Price	Price
		IDE HARD DRIVES	3	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00
		Samsung 3.5 inch Internet Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!			
		SKU: 123-456789			

Shipping: GROUND... - \$ 8.00 \$ 8.00

Subtotal: \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax: \$ 0.00

Recalculate Total

Total: \$ 86.00

If different than "Ship to" address, please enter your "Bill to" address exactly as it appears on your credit card statement.

Please fill in payment information below and click "Complete Check Out" when done

Bill To	Payment as Credit Card
Name Robert L. Martin	Card Type American Express
Address 1 5314 North	Card #
Address 2 250 West	Expiration OCT 1999
City Rostov-on-Don	Name on Card
State or Province	Purchase Order #
Zip/Postal Code abc123	Email Address bobm@imall.com
Country Russia	(Confirmation to be sent to this address)
Day Phone 15.888.426.7306	Other Payment Options
Eve. Phone 15.888.426.7306	Electronic Others
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, please securely save my payment and shipping information to speed check out on future orders.	TeleCheck Pay By Electronic Check Online US Only
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to receive periodic Email notification of new features and special offers.	Payment by Cash at Western Union
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, make the information that I supplied available to selected companies so that they may contact me regarding products or services.	COD Check or Money Order Order by Telephone
	Continue ...complete check out

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FIG. 6A

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)



7/19

check out
...using Western Union
FlashCash



180
powered by imall

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

Return to Shipping	Det	Product Description	Qty	Unit Price	Price
		IDE HARD DRIVES	3	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00

182 Samsung 3.5 inch Internet Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!

SKU: 123-456789

Shipping: GROUND... - \$ 8.00 \$ 8.00

Subtotal: \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax: \$ 0.00

Recalculate

Total: \$ 86.00 186

Purchase Total in Russian Rubles: 2212.78 200

Western Union Fee in Russian Rubles: 192.97 202

Grand Total in Russian Rubles: 2405.75 204

You have chosen to pay cash for this transaction using —192
Western Union FlashCash. Please enter email address,
review information below, and click "Complete Check Out".

WESTERN UNION FLASHCASH

Payment by Western Union FlashCash

Other Payment Options

Email Address: bobm@imall.com
(Confirmation to be sent to this address)

To locate you nearest agent in Russia
or worldwide [click here](#). — 196 194

Tell Me More About Western Union FlashCash

The current exchange rate is:
\$1.00 USD = 25.73 Russian Rubles } 198

Products selected for purchase will not be
shipped until payment is received by
Western Union. If not paid within 72 hours,
this order will be cancelled.

Electronic		Other Payments
TeleCheck	Payment by Credit Card	Order by Telephone
Pay By Electronic Check Online US Only		COD Check or Money Order

- ☒ Yes, I would like to receive periodic email notification of new features and special offers.
- ☒ Yes, make the information that I supplied available to selected companies so that they may contact me regarding products or services.

Continue ...complete check out

205

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FIG. 6B





SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)


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180


order confirmation

 My Account

 About Security

 powered by imall

Items ordered from "Micro Six Test Account"

 Return to Shipping

Product Description	Qty	Unit Price	Price
IDE HARD DRIVES	3	\$ 26.00	\$ 78.00

182 Samsung 3.5 inch Internet Floppy Disk Drive, FULL 1 YEAR REPLACEMENT WARRANTY!!!

SKU: 123-456789

Shipping via Ground \$ 8.00

Subtotal \$ 86.00

No Sales Tax \$ 0.00


Total:	\$ 86.00	186
--------	----------	-----

Purchase Total in Russian Rubles: 2212.78 — 200

Western Union Fee in Russian Rubles: 192.97 — 202

Grand Total in Russian Rubles:	2405.75	204
--------------------------------	---------	-----

206



WESTERN UNION | FLASHCASH

You have chosen to pay cash for this transaction using Western Union FlashCash. To make payment, print this page or write down the Transaction Number listed below. Take this information along with payment to your nearest Western Union agent. To locate your nearest agent in Russia, or worldwide, [click here](#).

196

FIG. 6C

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180

Transaction Number: 1234567890

208

Products selected for purchase will not be shipped until payment is received by Western Union. If not paid within 72 hours, this order will be cancelled.

194 — Tell Me More About WesternUnion FlashCash

The current exchange rate is:
\$1.00 USD = 25.73 Russian Rubles

198

Thank you for ordering from "XYZ" Merchant. Your order # xxxx-xxxxxxxxxx was received mm/dd/yyyy a.m./p.m. You will receive an e-mail confirmation at your selected e-mail address.

Ship to Name/Address/Phone:

Bill to Name/Address/Phone:

184A —

Robert L. Martin
5314 North
250 West
Rostov-on-Don
abc123 Russia
15.888.426.7306
15.888.426.7306

Robert L. Martin
5314 North
250 West
Rostov-on-Don
abc123 Russia
15.888.426.7306
15.888.426.7306

184B

For followup order questions, please contact "XYZ" Merchant via phone, FAX, or e-mail:

E-Mail:
Toll-Free Phone #:
Phone #:
FAX:
Website:
Mailing Address:

order@"XYZ"Merchant.com
1-800-xxx-call
1-xxx-555-1212
"XYZ"Merchant.com
"XYZ"Merchant
123 Address Way
Site xxx
Anytown, USA 12345

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FIG. 6D

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http://intl.westerunion.com/db/web/iamnol6a.nst/Main?OpenFrameSel - Microsoft Internet Explorer

WESTERN UNION Quick Search

Country List City

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA new york Go

<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Uneeda Check Cashing #28</u>	New York	NY 862 Lexington Ave	10021
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Food Emporium #742</u>	New York	NY 1066 Third Avenue	10021
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Esther Check Cashing</u>	New York	NY 91-A Pinehurst Ave	10033
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>A&P #712</u>	New York	NY 228 West End Ave	10023
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Food Emporium #727</u>	New York	NY 452 West 43rd St	10036
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Banco Popular Fsb</u>	West New York	NJ 5310 Bergenline Ave	07093
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Kara Travel & Tours</u>	New York	NY 1225 Broadway Suite #815	10001
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Uneeda Check Cashing #24</u>	New York	NY 250 East Houston St	10002
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Empire Travel</u>	New York	NY 103 Clinton St	10002
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Chambers St Check Cash</u>	New York	NY 79 Chambers St	10007
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Western Union</u>	New York	NY 1440 Broadway	10018
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Esco Drug Co Inc</u>	New York	NY 687 9th Ave	10036
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Harold Lee & Sons Inc</u>	New York	NY 32 Pell St	10013
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pay-O-Matic #301</u>	New York	NY 260 West 14th St	10011
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>79 Avenue D Check Cashing Corp</u>	New York	NY 89-97 Ave C	10009
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pay-O-Matic #315</u>	New York	NY 2351 Second Ave	10035
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Columbus Circle Ck Cashing</u>	New York	NY 867 9th Ave	10019
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>G & R Check Cash #19</u>	New York	NY 73 4th Ave	10003
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pay-O-Matic #317</u>	New York	NY 3426 Broadway	10031
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pay-O-Matic #318</u>	New York	NY 3651 Broadway	10031
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Pay-O-Matic #320</u>	New York	NY 4284 Broadway	10034
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Gamma Check Cashing</u>	New York	NY 158 E 45 St	10017
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Ukrainian Orthodox Fcu</u>	New York	NY 215 Second Ave	10003
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Popular Cash Express</u>	New York	NY 175 Byckman St	10040
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Franklin Check Cashing #1</u>	New York	NY 228 Avenue B	10009
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Yomar Travel Corp</u>	New York	NY 86 Nagle Ave	10040
<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Natalie's Travel</u>	New York	NY 319 Audubon	10033

FIG. 7A

11/19

http://intl.westernunion.com/db/web/iamnol6a.nst/Main?OpenFrameSel - Microsoft Internet Explorer

WESTERN UNION Quick Search

Country List City

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ▼ new york Go

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
United States of America

AGENT INFORMATION

Agent Name: WESTERN UNION

Address: 1440 BROADWAY
New York, NY 10018

Maps: GET YAHOO MAP
Phone Num: (212) 354-97500000

Agent Type:

☐ Send Money Transfer Only

☐ Receive Money Transfer Only

☒ Send and Receive Money Transfer

WESTERN UNION HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
700 - 2359	Open 24 Hours a day	Open 24 Hours a day	2359	2359	700 - 2359	800 - 2359

Holiday Hours may be subject to change. You may want to call the Agent.

LUNCH

Closed for Lunch No

FIG. 7B

12/19

To send a FlashCash SM		WESTERN UNION		FLASHCASH SM	
Amount (in words) _____		Amount <input type="text"/>		DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA	
FlashCash Transaction Number <input type="text"/>		Agency		Operator number	
Sender		Date / /		Time	
First name(s)		Money Transfer Control Number		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Last name		Amount		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Address		Charge		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
City		Tax		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Province/Country		Total amount received		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Postal Code		Identification		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Telephone no. () ()		Type		Expiration	
E-mail address		Number		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	
Customer's signature		Agent's signature		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	

FSI 100 (8/89)

THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE SERVICE IS PROVIDED ARE SET OUT ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM. BY SIGNING THIS FORM, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THOSE TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

Copyright © 1999 WESTERN UNION FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

FIG. 8

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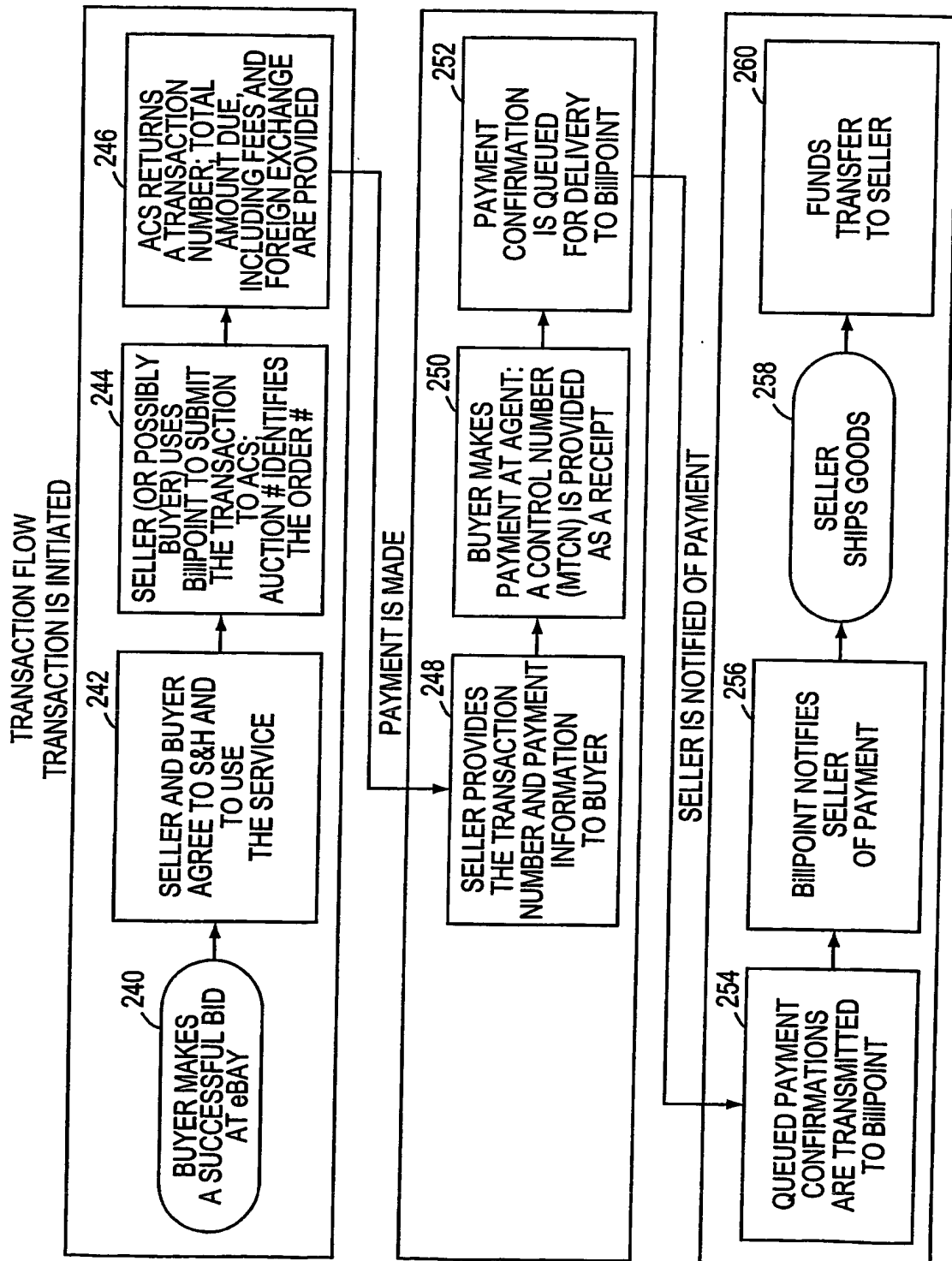


FIG. 9

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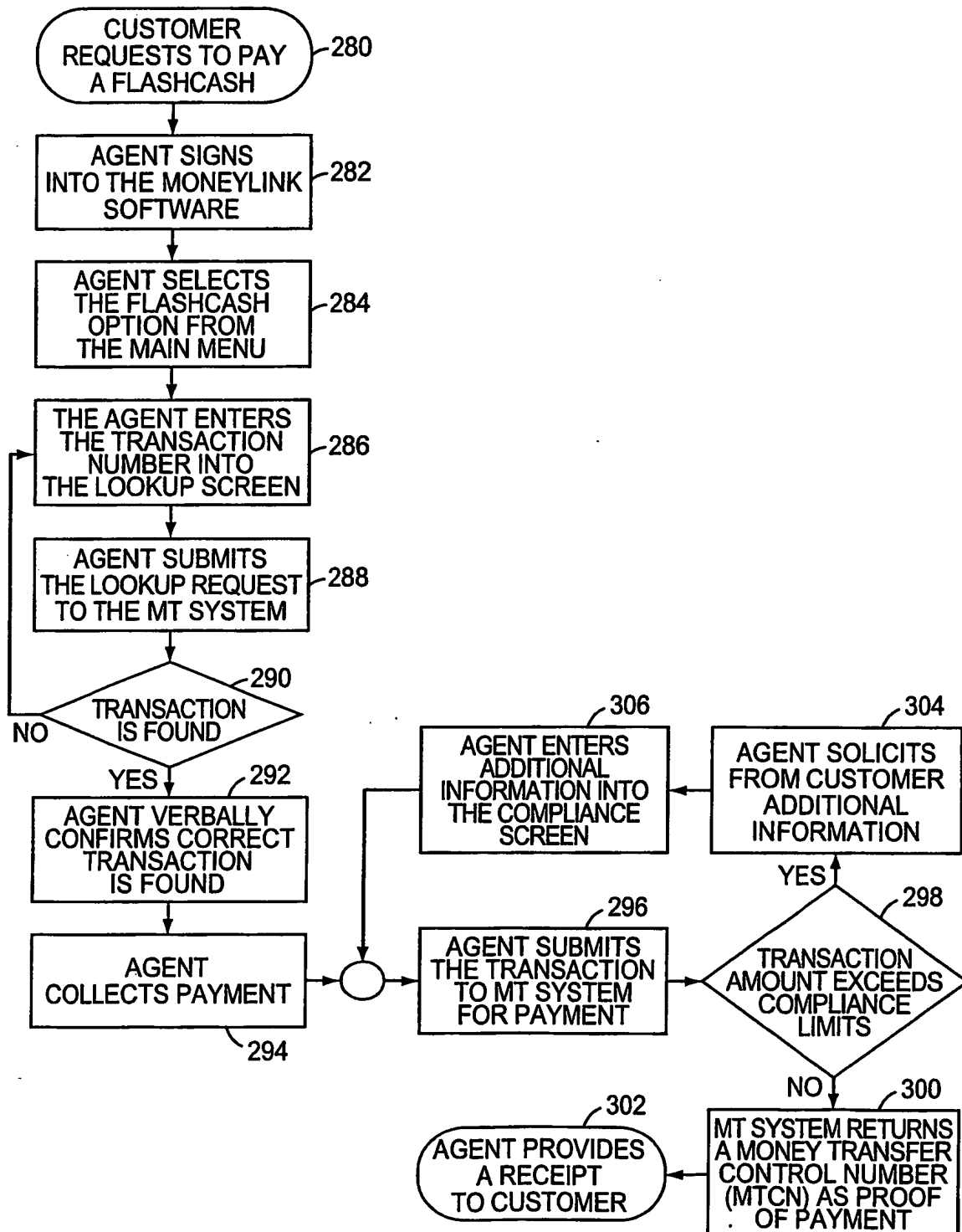


FIG. 10

15/19

MS Dos ATP.EXE

FlashCash

Transaction No. 83313197

Amount: .00

Esc-Cancel F10-Proceed

ATTENTION

Display
your broadcast
message here
if you
would like to

Please Enter Transaction Number || ||100||WLUA

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10

HELP

FIG. 11A

16/19

MS ATP.EXE

FLASHCASH

Sender: ROBERT L. MARTIN

Telephone: (888) 426-7306

Receiver: MICRO SIX TEST ACCOUNT

Order #: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Attn:

Exchange rate: .24 Dollar per Zloty

Expected payout amount: 86.00 Dollars

Additional Services

Sender/Receiver Info

Financial Summary

Send Amount	354.66
Charge	15.60
Amount to Collect	371.16

||100||WLUA

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10

HELP MENU SEND

FIG. 11B

17/19

MS
DOS ATP.EXE

FLASHCASH

Sender: ROBER
Telephone: (888) 42
Receiver: MICRO
Order #:
Attn:
Exchange rate:
Expected payout amo

MTCN: 121-000-8562
Time: 352P
Destination Currency: 86.00 Dollar
Net Foreign Exchange Rate: .24

Enter-OK

Financial Summary

Send Amount	354.66
Charge	16.50
Amount to Collect	371.16

Additional Services

Sender/Receiver Info

F1 F2 F3 F4 F5 F6 F7 F8 F9 F10
HELP MENU SEND

||100||WLUA

FIG. 11C

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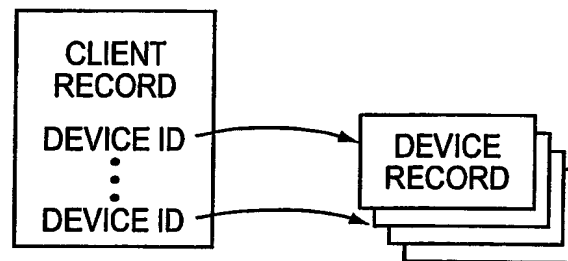


FIG. 12

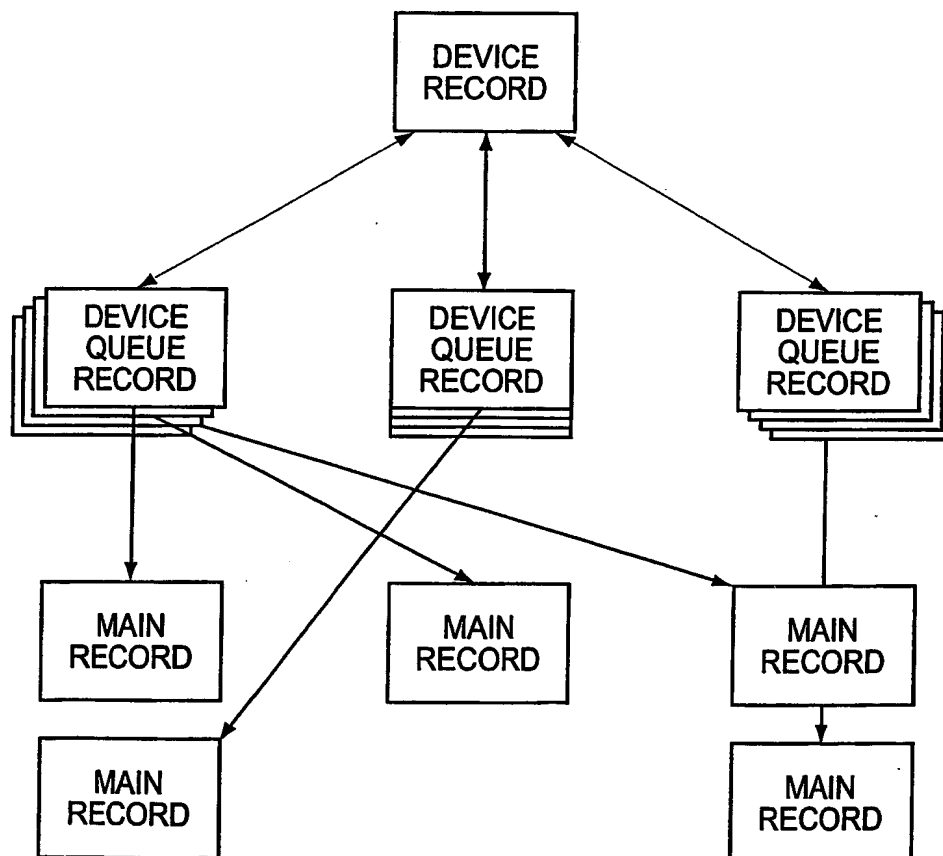


FIG. 13

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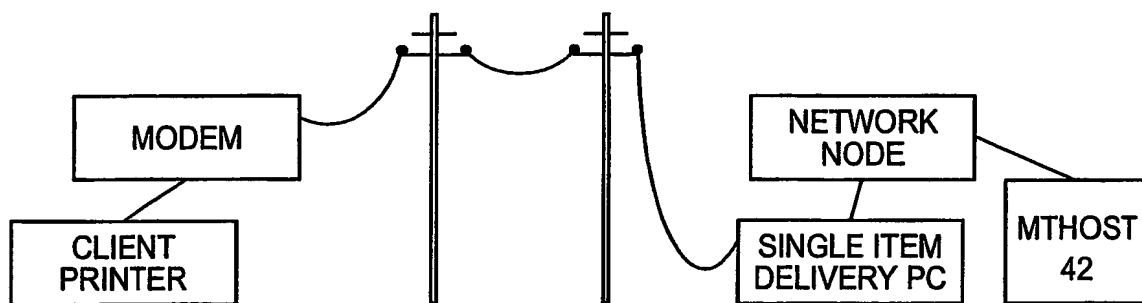


FIG. 14

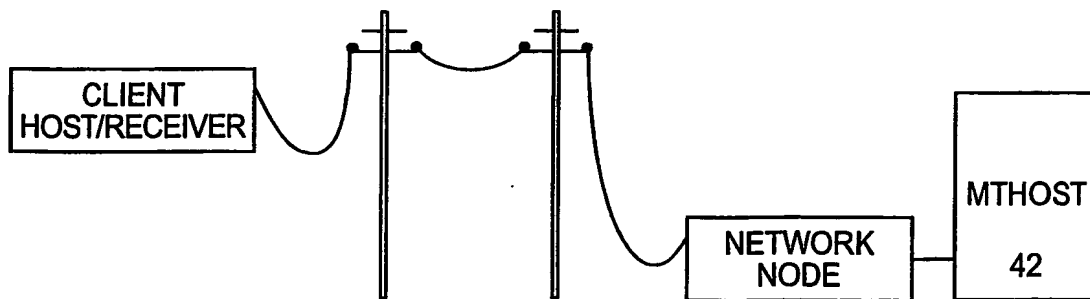


FIG. 15